



# 68th IFLA Council and General Conference

## August 18-24, 2002

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**Code Number:** 018-84-E  
**Division Number:** VIII  
**Professional Group:** Latin America and the Caribbean  
**Joint Meeting with:** -  
**Meeting Number:** 84  
**Simultaneous Interpretation:** Yes

### **An Alternative for implementing a large number of Public Libraries in a Developing Country**

**“ANISIO TEIXEIRA Public Library Project in Caetité. Bahia /Brazil”**

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#### ***Abstract***

*The Anisio Teixeira Public Library is a new and significant cultural building in the city of Caetité - Bahia /Brazil. It was established through an association with the public and private sectors. It is an innovative initiative for the Brazilian society, which aims to guarantee the people of the region free access to information, in order to facilitate social and intellectual development, in keeping with the objectives of the important Brazilian educator, Anisio Teixeira. It is actually a facility not only for the city but also for the neighboring cities through the mobile library services. More projects like these are needed to ensure social equity.*

*Public Library – Brazil - Reading- Citizens - Mobile Library - Anisio Teixeira.*

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#### **Introduction**

The influence, which public libraries exert in the development of society, facilitates an evaluation of the extent to which the decision makers in a country must give more priority to building Public Libraries. Public Libraries play a significant role in stimulating reading in a more effective way than any other school, family or commercial reading incentive program. They stimulate and also fascinate the human mind by developing the

imagination. They offer the ideal environment for the creation of confident, reliable, competent and independent readers, who can contribute to the formation of a more fair-minded democratic society. It is through reading that the human being acquires not only knowledge but also tools for understanding the world.

The Unesco Manifesto on Public Libraries reinforced the idea that there are institutions responsible for every age group of the population, without social or religious discrimination. Public libraries must allow every citizen within the parameters of its sphere of influence to have the basic right to access information free of any ideological, political or religious censorship. Through the availability of updated collections and with high quality services. UNESCO encourages governments to support and assume responsibility for the building of Public Libraries.

Brazil is a country of continental dimensions with a population that already reaches a total of almost 180 million people. As a result of its public policies on social action, they have not attained basic satisfactory levels with respect to attention paid to the communities in need.

Historically, the Brazilian society has not developed a knowledge culture. It is unlikely that a privileged sector of the population who has had access to needed information feels integrated into the community. Thus, the Brazilian librarians, sensitive to those issues have worked together with society and the public authority to change this situation, by building of a significant number of Public Libraries.

### **Social and Political Participation of the Librarian Profession**

In 1987, as representatives of the professional class through FEBAB (Brazilian Federation of Librarian Associations), a document was prepared and handed over to the National Assembly Constituent. On that occasion a new Constitution was drafted for Brazil and a draft copy, which included an article in Magna Carta, was sent to the archives, libraries, museums, and institutions fostering cultural development. The aim was to build and preserve the cultural patrimony of the Brazilian people.

Since then, as the Legislation recommends, government has carried out numerous actions, even when it was far from reaching set targets. Government is immersed not only in a cultural issue of political will which always find other priorities in their plans, but the country also lack basic infrastructural plans. During the years of intellectual formation, the weight of political decision and the fact that libraries and museums are not frequently visited must also be taken into consideration.

While preparing the document to be presented to the National Assembly Constituent, the work of Anísio Spinola Teixeira was recognized. He was a Brazilian educator who was born 100 years ago. In 2000 the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth was commemorated. In 1950 Anísio Teixeira, as a member of the government in the education field, was already defending free education saying that **libraries are fundamental institutions for education, preceding the School**". He wrote various books on public education and devoted his life to defending the theme in the country. Apart from this, he established and administered institutions, engaged in teaching and worked tirelessly for Brazilian education.

### **Anísio Teixeira, Caetité and INB**

Knowing the vast, enlightened and rich work of Anísio Teixeira on education, it's difficult to conceive that his native town, Caetité was in a fully rural region, lacking facilities and distant from the main centers. It was not as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century that the region was significant for its cultural heritage. During the renowned "golden era" of history, Caetité was part of the mineral exploration course. Therefore, it experienced a superior life to its neighbors due to the affluence of wealthy travelers from Europe. It is a region that is rich in mineral resources and where there is a uranium exploration field. The INB – Brazil Nuclear Industries owns the field and

is responsible for the manufacture of nuclear fuel which supplies the two Brazilian nuclear energy plants and which in future will also export the surplus of natural uranium.

Anisio Teixeira was born into an affluent family in the region, thus he had an early opportunity to study in the capital, Salvador. His circumstances gave him the opportunity to interact with the political directorate in order to develop an education model for the city, by building schools. Thus, citizens were offered better opportunities in life. Anisio Teixeira considered the power of education as a means of social transformation. Today in Caetité, in spite of the low income of the region, there are public schools of all levels, including the tertiary level, which provides a higher education model.

Caetité is 900 km from Salvador and 1500 km from Rio de Janeiro. Since 1995 the INB -Brazil Nuclear Industries - developed activities in Caetité which intensified actions for establishing the plant, in order to benefit from the uranium extracted there. It is Brazil Nuclear Industries' policy to integrate social and cultural projects where plants are located. It is through this policy that it participated in the building of the **Anisio Teixeira Public Library in Caetité – Brazil.**

### **Anisio Teixeira Cultural Foundation and the Anisio Teixeira House**

Preparing for the commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Anisio Teixeira's birth, the Anisio Teixeira Cultural Foundation, a non-profit organization seeks to preserve and circulate the educator's work. With headquarters in Salvador, capital of Bahía, the institution lobbied the Bahian government for resources to restore the House in Caetité, where Anisio Teixeira was born and spent his childhood.

It is an architectural House representative of the colonial Brazilian style, of the "golden era". This historical period has a very special significance in the Brazilian culture for its dual purposes. On the one hand, it attracted Europeans to spread Christianity among the natives. On the other hand, it attracted them to explore the richness of the region and to gain wealth. It was like this since the beginning of our history; faith and authority, religion and gold. The Anisio Teixeira House is located in the heart of Caetité, in its main center Sant'Ana



Square, together with the Cathedral named after the Saint. Traditionally, the Brazilian city, has been represented mainly by the Catholic faith. On the calendar the city celebrates the week of Saints with processions and musical shows in the square.

The government of Bahía embraced the Anisio Teixeira House project and was determined to form a team of restorers from the IPAC (Institute of Artistic and Cultural Patrimony) to redesign the house to its original beauty. The work was delayed more than a year and its re-inauguration was a social and political event for the region. The House was opened to the public and was furnished with antique furniture and personal objects from the family. It was transformed into a Memorial Center, that was visited by travelers and by all those interested in the educator. However, the Anisio Teixeira Cultural Foundation strived to make the institution more dynamic, to integrate it into the city life and to make a greater impact on the people. It was in this way the first contacts were initiated with the INB - Brazil Nuclear Industries- who was setting up itself effectively to explore the Uranium Mine in Caetité.

## **The Society for the Anisio Teixeira Cultural Foundation, the INB and the Bahían Government.**

The first negotiations between the Anisio Teixeira Cultural Foundation and the INB – Brazil Nuclear Industries – were possible because the Government of the Bahían State established a link with the Public Libraries State System of Bahía. It is a system that is considered a “Model” in Brazilian time which made its mark more recently when the Barris Public Library was remodeled and modernized (with more than 7000 square meters in Salvador). Its headquarters houses the Head of the Public Library State System who is responsible for the co-ordination of 220 Libraries in the State. An International Seminar took place in the Head office of the Public Library System for its re-inauguration in March, 1998. The seminar was promoted by IFLA/LAC and IFLA Public Libraries Division. It was called “Regional Meeting: Unesco Manifesto on Public Libraries.”

The participation of the Head of the Library State System in the project was encouraged and finalized in order to carry out the first stages in the building of the Caetitê Library. Through the Head and the Anisio Teixeira Foundation Consultant team, the technical aspects and the purchase of furniture and fixtures were completed. Later staff training for auxiliary personnel who worked in the offices of the Caetitê Library was done. This established an important permanent agreement between the Bahían government and the Anisio Teixeira Foundation. Recently, another example of this participation at the state level was established also with the claim for Caetitê’s official district.

## **The Anisio Teixeira Public Library**

The inauguration of the ANISIO TEIXEIRA Public Library in Caetitê – Bahía – took place in July 2000. The Library occupies the Anisio Teixeira House which contains four rooms and an external patio. It started with 3000 volumes, including reference works and works of general interest. The lending section includes significant authors of classical literature and especially Brazilian authors. Apart from the reference and lending sections, there are sections for magazines, reference and research of heritage material. The children’s section promotes reading programs in the city. The Library functions in a computerized environment with access to the Internet. It provides services to Caetitê’s urban population and particularly to the significant number of students at all levels who want to access these services. The

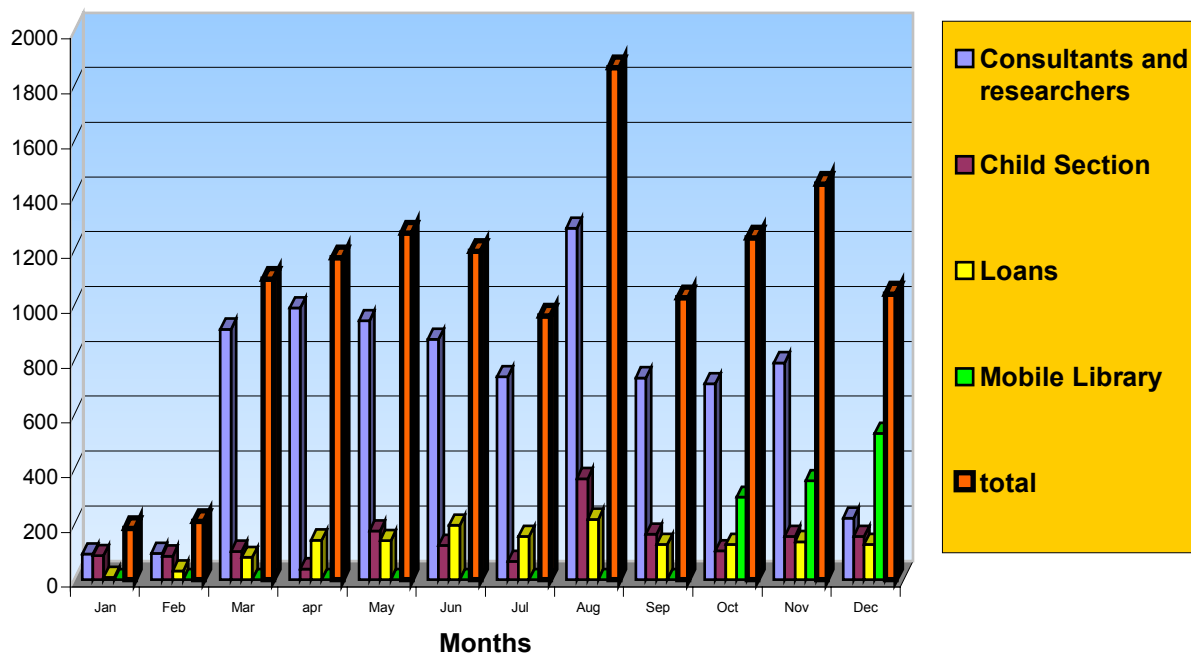


Library’s principal objective is to



expand the reading horizon for citizens, not only for the art of reading but as a form of elevating their quality of life. It also allows individuals personal freedom by stimulating reflection and integration into the socio-cultural process. In the first year of operations the statistical data showed that interest increased every day.

## Anísio Teixeira Public Library Statistics in 2001



The Anísio Teixeira Public Library gives public access to the complete collection of the intellectual production of the eminent educator. This is available on Internet and on CD-Rom through Anísio Teixeira's virtual library. The Library has already been visited by a large number of persons including researchers and the layperson. It houses 500 items of information, including articles, magazines, newspapers, letters, speeches, books (including out of print material; in original and complete text) reports, work presented in Congresses, Biographies and Theses with Bibliographic references, resumé and complete text. In order to access them the address is: [www.prossiga.br/anisioteixeira/](http://www.prossiga.br/anisioteixeira/)

In the same vein, the Anísio Teixeira House has offered artistic education courses and cultural gatherings such as debates, seminars, theatrical courses, dance, music and film shows which makes it a focus of activity in the community.

### Anísio Teixeira's Mobile Library

At the beginning of 2001 the INB carried out socio-economic research in the region in order to prioritize its actions. The results of the research revealed that the people with low economic resources living on the outskirts of the city and in the neighboring towns, lacked transport and the resources to visit the Library, even though they were interested in participating in programs offered by the library.

This fact gave rise to a new project of Library extension activities with the creation of its **Mobile Services**. A newly signed agreement between the three institutions with the participation of the Officials in Caetité, facilitated the establishment of the project. The Bahían Government participated through a very attractive program called "Make Culture". This program offers compensation to organizations that engage in

cultural projects. It allows INB to assume total investment and it will be compensated with **recognition** for future donations. The Anisio Teixeira Cultural Foundation has established a new link with the Head of the Public Library State System in Bahia through the Barris Public Library which already operates two mobile libraries in Salvador.

The libraries that offer extension services and lending publications in the areas of the city where there were no libraries were able to contribute their experience to this new project. With this collaboration the manufacture of the mobile library was entrusted to the same dealer. The vehicle of the Anisio Teixeira's Bookmobile was more modern than the ones before, due to the evolution of the audiovisual resources and the



new technologies. They have resources which compare favorably with those of the Library vehicles of developed countries being equipped with sound, laptop, TV and video, possibly telephone lines and the conventional publications. The personnel to work in the Bookmobile were selected from trained personnel in the teaching profession, who worked in the Anisio Teixeira Public Library. The team constitutes students from the educator's course, specializing in theatre, recreation and storytelling.

The mobile library was handed over to the Anisio Teixeira Public Library in Caetité in October 2001. Since then, its schedule has been intense and varied in order to attract communities that are part of its route. They have done weekly and fortnightly visits to designated areas. The activities that are carried out in a day ranges from lending publications to educational video presentation, presentation of theatrical pieces, music sessions and "History Telling Hour." All these activities are very stimulating and attractive, considering the rate of illiteracy outside the urban perimeter is high and that no other developing project covers all these areas, in order to attract and provide the incentive to read.

In the program planned for this year, there is an activity targeted to adults with low school grades, who are called functionally illiterate. The Mobile Library will play an attractive role in delivering interesting topics, establishing a link with the city life, and providing a change from their present lifestyle. This program has engaged the interest of official groups in order to carry out joint actions in this area. This is a demonstration of the socio-economic analysis achieved by INB in the region.

## **Conclusions**

Currently, everyone understands that programs like these must provide incentive in those areas where information resources are scarce.

The Anísio Teixeira Cultural Foundation have already been sought after by other institutions and enterprises, in order to develop similar programs and make them viable in other regions of the Bahían state.

The INB plans to establish libraries in other states where they operate like in of Rio de Janeiro. This project has already made its mark. Apart from embellishing its image through its actions which are impacting on the social and cultural sector, such a project takes advantage of and facilitates better training of future employees.

The expansion capacity of the project can be a viable solution in the fight against illiteracy, in the regions where access to information has been limited. The project is creative and innovative and at the same time credible. It captures the receptiveness of the population, being independent of official programs.

In general, the project proves that associations among the public and private sectors can be beneficial to society.

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