

NEWS UPDATE

May 31, 2011

There has been much activity over the past few weeks for the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network, CKLN. This monthly update will provide Board members and key stakeholders with a synopsis of our activities. Also, take a look at the new website, www.ckln.org. Please feel free to give your feedback and to let us know of any relevant activities that you would like us to share with others.



CKLN Updates International Donors

At a meeting of international donors convened by the World Bank, Mr. Ken Sylvester, CEO of CKLN, gave an update on the CKLN programme, with a focus on implementation of C@ribNET as well as the development of national knowledge, learning and research networks in Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states.

Attendees at the donor meeting, held at the offices of the European Union on May 13th 2011 in Barbados, were from the World Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), CARICOM, the European Union, US State Department, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Department for International Development (DFID) and the CKLN team.

Specifically, Mr. Sylvester provided an update on the topology of the C@ribNET, cost considerations relating to procurement of bandwidth, and the critical issue of sustainability. The donors were supportive and interested in the implementation of C@ribNET and agreed to hold bilateral discussions with CKLN before year end to explore strategies for capacity building and sustainability. A follow-up donor meeting will be held later this year.



Finalising Agreements for C@ribNET Infrastructure

After much negotiation, CKLN and a major communications provider in the region have finalised an agreement for providing the connectivity for C@ribNET. The provider promises a high-end, upgradable fiber optic network that will become the network of choice for education and research collaboration within the Caribbean and the rest of the world.

C@ribNET is a knowledge, learning and research network that will support the collaboration between tertiary institutions in the region in the development of courses and programmes that will be available to a wider Caribbean citizenry.

C@ribNET will support functional cooperation between CARICOM institutions and strengthen the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, CSME, as well as being connected to the global research and education networks.

Supported by the European Union, C@ribNET will comprise two tiers - a designated "backbone level" and "access level". The CKLN will be responsible for the administration, control, monitoring and operation of all backbone and access nodes. The backbone will be assembled in a ring topology between Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and Dominican Republic along with Miami, USA. These locations were selected based on the capability to provide readily affordable co-location services for the network and other equipment required for C@ribNET as well as the concentration of telecom providers' network capacity converged in these cities. Some backbone nodes will receive the connections to the international research and education communities - Internet2 Network (U.S.A.), GÉANT (Europe) and redCLARA (Latin America). An official signing of the Agreement between CKLN and the provider will take place in June 2011.



CKLN Makes Presentation to Cabinet - Grenada

On April 12, 2011, CKLN CEO, Ken Sylvester, made a presentation to the Hon. Senator Franka Bernadine, Minister of Education and Human Resource Development in Grenada, along with other senior Ministry officials and tertiary institutions. Through funding provided by the European Union, approximately EC\$½ Million is being used for a pilot project in open and distance learning, using the T.A. Marryshow Community College (TAMCC). The pilot will demonstrate how technology, particularly Information and Communication Technology (ICT), can be used to enhance student access, improve efficiencies and quality of service. It is intended that this pilot will extend lessons learned to other Community Colleges in the region. Mr. Sylvester further updated the government officials on C@ribNET. The regional fiber optic network will link Caribbean and international tertiary level institutions, civil institutions and research institutes engaged in knowledge formation and sharing.

On April 18, 2011, CKLN made a presentation on the local and regional initiatives to the Hon. Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada, and his Cabinet and updated them on the status of the programme. The Prime Minister reiterated his full support for the continuing development of the CKLN programme.



In-Country National Knowledge and Learning Network Development Workshops

With a US\$600,000 grant from the Inter-American Development Bank, IDB, CKLN, engaged in consultations with educational, telecommunications, and public sector representatives in beneficiary CARICOM member states, assisting them to develop a blueprint that will guide the development of national knowledge and learning networks. These national knowledge and learning networks are internationally referred to as NRENs, and are increasingly viewed as the vital and core component of modern teaching, research and learning.

There are over 100 NRENs globally, and the best results internationally have come from sharing, openness and collaboration at all levels; national, regional, international. By facilitating the development of NRENs, CKLN is assisting CARICOM member states to join the established NRENs across the world. NRENs in the Caribbean will be connected together and to the international education and knowledge community through the regional network, C@ribNET.



EU/Caribbean Cooperation in Research and Education - The CKLN partners with the Erasmus Mundus

On May 11, 2011, administrators, researchers and students from Jamaica, Cuba and the Dominican Republic met with representatives of the European Union (EU), working with the CaribErasmus Project. As it now stands, the Caribbean region is left out of the policy framework which guides EU Science, Education and Technology agenda. This project was developed under the auspices of the Erasmus Mundus Programme to remedy this. The project objectives were to consult relevant regional stakeholders and, in particular, decision and policy-makers on strategies to enhance cooperation between the two regions in the field of Higher Education for presentation to the European Union in the form of policy advice.

CKLN is particularly interested in harnessing the collaborative efforts of regional researchers as an essential community of interest, utilising the Caribbean research and education network, C@aribNET. With C@ribNET having international links, the CaribErasmus effort is seen as mirroring the CKLN interest of targeting Caribbean researchers and research institutions, not only for increased intra-regional collaboration through connectivity, but also for strengthening international cooperation for collaborating in areas of mutual interest. The discussions were held at the Mona campus of The University of the West Indies, and will continue to be held with researchers and institutions in other areas of the Caribbean in coming months.

See the CaribErasmus website: http://www.cariberasmus.eu/?page_id=8