

REPORT ON SIDSNET / CPACC INTERNET TRAINING WORKSHOP ST. LUCIA

September 20th- 22nd

Prepared by
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Introduction

This workshop was the second of ten SIDSnet / CPACC Internet Training workshops in the Caribbean, and ran simultaneously with one in Guyana. It was held at the Cable & Wireless¹ College in Castries, a modern facility constructed for this very purpose. There were 22 workstations, 11 of which were connected to a Local Area Network (LAN). Mr. Eric Van Praag and Mr. Alan Duncan were the trainers. I acted as moderator/ facilitator.

Attendance

Twenty-one persons², mainly from Government agencies (the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, The Water and Sewerage Authority, The Ministry of Health and the St. Lucia National Trust) attended the workshop for the first two days. Sixteen were present for the final day. The participants were at a similar stage of internet skills.

Agenda

Mr. Van Praag and Mr. Duncan, upon their arrival the day before the workshop, discussed and modified the existing agenda according to what the participants indicated their needs to be. This assessment had been carried out by Ms. Anita James, CPACC's National Focal Point in St. Lucia, about a week before the workshop. The final agenda³ was influenced not only by more comments from participants, but by the resources available during the three days. For instance, when there was no internet connection, topics that did not require online access were taught. However, everyone was enthusiastic about building and maintaining Websites and Web Pages and there was a concentration on that topic.

Costs

The local costs of the workshop totaled EC\$2,500 (US\$936). This includes the rental of the venue, materials and supplies. Cable and Wireless is to be the recipient of this full amount, as everything was provided through them. They have submitted an invoice that has been submitted to the UNDP, Barbados office.

¹ Cable & Wireless is the only Internet Service Provider (ISP) in St. Lucia.

² Participants' list attached

³ Agenda attached

Workshop Review

Communication with the associated parties (Ms. Anita James, NFP and resident coordinator) prior to the workshop was via telephone, fax and email. This proved quite adequate as Ms. James was quick to respond to any questions, and speedily initiated the process of extending invitations to potential participants. As soon as the participants were confirmed, she communicated this to us. So before the workshop, trainers and myself had a sense of the numbers to expect and what their areas of interests were. We should like to extend this activity to all upcoming workshops.

The Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Mr. Wilfred Pierre gave brief opening remarks. In addition a representative of Cable and Wireless, Ms. Hippolyte, gave a brief talk about the Internet services that the company provided.

For the first day, there was no Internet connection until after lunch. This was not too much of an inconvenience because it was during this time that a Microsoft Power Point presentation was made. When there was a connection, we were intermittently 'booted off'. For the most part, the technicians were responded immediately. On the second day, when a similar situation occurred, there was no response until half an hour later. The main problem, however, was technical problems with the main server at Cable and Wireless. This was apparently a frequent occurrence. The final day went rather well and participants were eager to add the finishing touches to their web pages.

Conclusions

In retrospect, I believe it would have been more appropriate to have the Internet Service Provider speak at the end of the workshop, when the participants would have a better understanding of the Internet. Also, it may be best to send the SIDSnet/CPACC coordinator one full working day before the workshop to "tidy up loose ends".

As the questionnaires indicate, participants were mostly satisfied with the workshop material and presentation. Most of them were unfamiliar with SIDSnet and were pleased to hear that such a network existed. A major concern, specifically with respect to building web pages using editors (e.g Front Page Editor) is motivating participants and then 'sending them away' without tools to maintain what they have learned.

As we experience each workshop, we get a better sense of the choices and limitations that a country may have with regard to the issues of the Internet (access, costs etc.) and accessibility to information resources. It is then the duty of organizations like CPACC and SIDSnet to continue to bridge these information gaps, by ensuring that such information networks are properly maintained.

SIDSnet / CPACC internet Training Workshop
Castries, St. Lucia
September 20 – 22, 1999

Participants List

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