



Dominican Republic

PUBLIC ACCESS LANDSCAPE STUDY SUMMARY



Overview

The Dominican Republic has high needs and readiness with regard to public access ICT, and its public access venues perform at about the norm for all countries in this study.

However, the country faces slow gains as it struggles with a range of social pressures, from infrastructure to poverty and migration.

Public access ICT challenges include developing better non-urban access, content, and services, more local content, updated facilities, and more networking between libraries.

PUBLIC ACCES LANDSCAPE	
Challenges ahead	Slow gains
Needs	Moderate
Needs (rank)	9/25
Readiness	High
Readiness (rank)	8/25

Findings

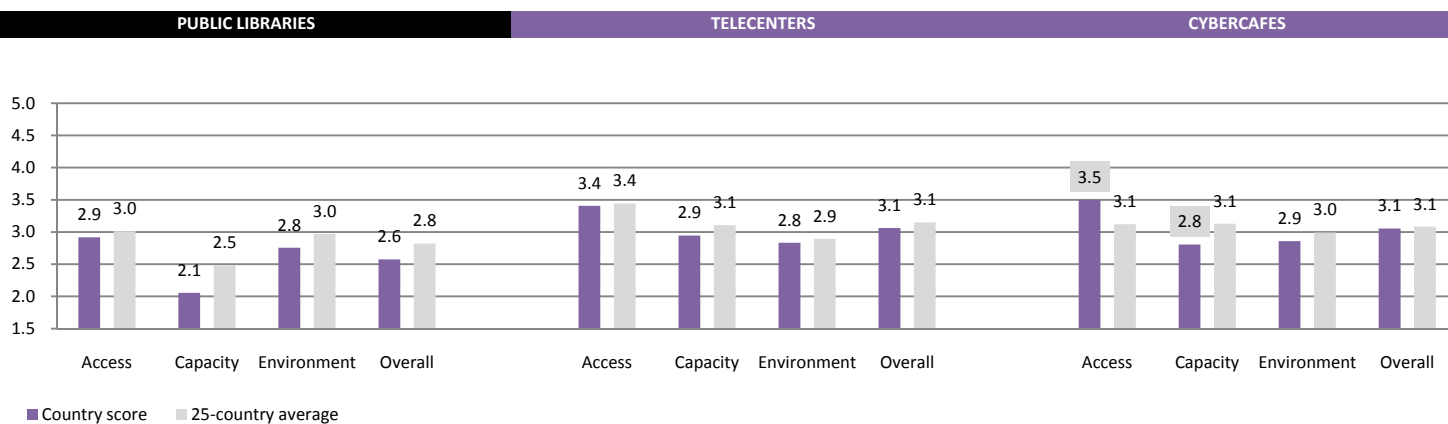
The most important findings with regard to public access ICT gathered by the research team include:

- Information-related resources (including ICTs) are usually more abundant and updated in urban venues than in rural ones.
- An increase in digital literacy and the increase in connectivity are interrelated; however, the number of computers per person and the capacity to use software packages does not guarantee the solution to the long-standing social problems.
- Sustainability and maintenance are important challenges for libraries, telecenters, and Internet centers when the facilities need to be updated and when the equipment must be replaced.
- The content and activities in the libraries and telecenters are not always coordinated with the local development possibilities, especially in rural zones.
- There is a need for future studies focusing on information and knowledge processes related to migration. The Dominican Republic is a destination for large numbers of people from Haiti who seek employment while the country loses many of its own workers to Europe and the US.

Other access-related observations include:

- **Education:** The education system promotes digital education activities, which has changed the scope of services needed and offered by public access ICT venues. Telecenters are often used, for instance, to learn computer skills to improve employment opportunities.
- **Age:** Most of the users in this country's public access ICT venues are children, teenagers, and young adults, and as a result, these venues target younger users and focus much less on older adults—especially elderly people. This targeting is apparent in the venue infrastructure and content.
- **Location:** Location inequities were notable, with venues heavily concentrated in urban communities. Not only are there more urban

ACE Scores



Shaded data points are outside standard deviation for 25-country set
 See the last page for country-specific definitions of these venues
 See the last page for a definition of the ACE scoring framework

Venue Distributions

	ALL PUBLIC ACCESS			PUBLIC LIBRARIES			TELECENTERS			CYBERCAFES			OTHER VENUES		
	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median
VENUES	1,420	10,017	5,489	300	1,111	1,062	864	1,273	366	256	8,693	3,225	0	398	46
number with ICT	ND	9,802	5,122	ND	349	96	ND	1,149	257	ND	8,507	3,251	0	146	13
% with ICT	ND	98%	87%	ND	31%	20%	ND	90%	100%	ND	98%	100%	NA	37%	92%
% OF PUBLIC VENUES	100%	100%	100%	21%	11%	20%	61%	12%	11%	18%	73%	67%	0%	4%	1%
POP. PER VENUE ('000)	7	8	5	32	93	37	11	205	68	38	52	9	NA	419	103
with ICT ('000)	ND	15	6	ND	2,093	208	ND	242	119	ND	62	10	NA	1,354	198

ND=No data

NA=Not applicable

See the last page for country-specific definitions of these venues

Data points are missing for some measures in some countries, which can result in oddities when comparing rows of data (for instance, the average number of venues with ICT appears high compared to the average number of venues). For a complete overview of comparative country data, please see the summary paper for this study.

User Profiles

		PUBLIC LIBRARIES				TELECENTERS				CYBERCAFES			
		Urban	25-country average	Non-urban	25-country average	Urban	25-country average	Non-urban	25-country average	Urban	25-country average	Non-urban	25-country average
INCOME	Low income	28%	28%	25%	35%	29%	26%	51%	24%	21%	26%	14%	24%
	Medium income	11%	54%	3%	46%	29%	56%	31%	45%	37%	56%	30%	45%
	High income	0%	7%	0%	6%	8%	9%	0%	4%	0%	9%	0%	4%
EDUCATION	No formal education	1%	3%	0%	2%	3%	5%	0%	6%	0%	5%	0%	6%
	Only elementary	24%	16%	8%	21%	17%	14%	57%	13%	5%	14%	5%	13%
	Up to high school	11%	50%	20%	36%	42%	37%	28%	32%	39%	37%	64%	32%
	College or university	28%	28%	6%	19%	12%	40%	15%	28%	22%	40%	31%	28%
AGE	14 and under	28%	12%	14%	15%	23%	9%	66%	14%	7%	9%	5%	14%
	15-35	38%	72%	17%	51%	49%	74%	43%	57%	45%	74%	45%	57%
	36-60	2%	12%	0%	23%	2%	12%	6%	8%	6%	12%	6%	8%
	61 and over	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
GENDER	% female	43%	53%	10%	49%	55%	39%	59%	39%	38%	39%	22%	39%

Percentages may not add up to 100% in all cases

See the last page for country-specific definitions of these venues

Data collected through interviews conducted by research teams. See country reports for details with regard to methodology, locations, timing, and data collection issues.

venues, they commonly feature better infrastructure, technologies, and services. The venues visited were in different types of zones and various economic conditions, and it was clear that socio-economic status directly affects equitable access to information and ICTs.

- **Gender:** While gender inequity exists nationwide, women are well-represented in the country's libraries and telecenters but less well in cybercafés. There are no conclusive data to explain this imbalance, but a contributing factor might be that women constitute a high percentage of the people in the formal education system, and libraries aim much of their content toward education.
- **Ethnicity:** Ethnicity was included in this study because of the strong presence of Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic. None of the venues studied offered content or services adapted culturally for Haitians.

Recommendations

The following success factors and recommendations emerged from this study:

- National and local governments need to redirect resources to small public libraries, and libraries need to update collections, provide ongoing training for the staff, improve and update the facilities and infrastructure, develop and present activities that will draw the local population to the facilities, and collaborate with other libraries to access other resources.
- The public library system should be strengthened to prevent the negative impact on reading and information access projects that have occurred in the past when there was a shift in government administrations.
- The State Secretary on Culture, in coordination with the municipalities, should inventory the resources of small libraries with regard to the human resources, information, and infrastructure to identify the most urgent needs and to create opportunities to collaborate and share experiences and good practices.
- Library and telecenter coordinators need to seek collaboration from NGOs to improve the capacities of the staff in the venues, implement the strategic uses of ICTs as tools for development, and establish a local identity and community partnerships.
- The State Secretary on Culture together with interested Departments of Bibliotecology should form a network among public libraries and create a web site that fosters collective creation and sharing among them. To accomplish this, it would be necessary to train the human resources to generate human networks and support online activities.
- Indotel is currently in a project conformation stage. However, it should move forward and provide telecenters with adequate hardware and software and fully train the staff. All of this is needed to diversify the roles that telecenters play within each community, strengthen the integration of the community with the telecenters, promote the venue identity, and support them financially. For example, a community journalism project using digital tools could be developed to document customs, cultural expressions, characters, history, and community news. Such projects could, in turn, be integrated through the creation of an online network to allow people from the different communities to know what is happening in other parts of the country. Indotel should also explore strategic uses of ICT applications, especially the Web 2.0 tools that Dominicans are so fond of and allow for new learning methodologies that integrate social appreciation and collaboration. Finally, Indotel should design more flexible regulations in relation to telecenter service charges that would improve the sustainability of the various hosting organizations and the project as a whole.
- National and local government agencies should design site-specific budgets and allocate funds to develop community library outreach programs and initiatives.
- Librarians/library coordinators need to develop community activities that coincide with the local cultural and entertainment practices. For example, they could organize chess tournaments that would present the libraries in a new and user-friendly way. It would also draw the people to the library to access information in new ways that would be more dynamic and entertaining while promoting the perception that libraries are open to everyone. For this to be effective, it would require that librarians and administrators become more open and accepting of their new role, and focus on the issue of why adults do not frequent the libraries. This is especially important for smaller libraries and the educational role they have achieved in the communities.

Geography & Economy

The Dominican Republic is a small country in the Antilles Archipelago with a population of approximately 9.6 million. About a third are under the age of 15, which is somewhat typical for this region.

Together with Haiti, the Republic forms the island that was christened “La Española” by Columbus in 1492; it borders Haiti to the West, the Atlantic Ocean to the north, the Caribbean Sea to the south, and the Mona Canal to the East, which separates it from Puerto Rico.

Like the United States, the Dominican Republic is a presidential representative democracy with executive, judicial, and legislative branches

Nearly half of the country’s population lives in poverty, which combined with the average age of the population produces a climate which fosters social ills such as homelessness, child labor exploitation, and school desertion. The country’s unemployment rate in 2007 stood at 15.6 percent.

COUNTRY PROFILE	
Total population* (millions)	9.6
Urban population* (millions)	6.5
Literacy (%)	87
E-readiness	ND
Gini	0.52

*World Bank 2006 data
ND=No data

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About this study

CIS's Public Access Landscape Study examined how people around the world access and use information and computers in public settings such as libraries, telecenters, and cybercafés. Understanding public access is particularly important in developing countries where there is often limited private access to information and communication technologies (ICTs).

This study covered a carefully-selected sample of 25 developing countries containing over 250,000 public access settings. Local research teams surveyed over 25,000 people and conducted interviews and focus groups in order to develop a detailed picture of the public access ICT landscape in each country. CIS collected, interpreted, and analyzed these detailed county-level results, and also conducted cross-country comparative analyses to uncover common themes, challenges and opportunities.

The goal of this work is to help strengthen public access to information and ICTs around the world.

This project was conducted in two phases. During the first phase, country-based research teams prepared draft reports describing the information access landscape, presented a national assessment, and compiled a preliminary set of recommendations. In the second phase, teams identified the principal locations where people seek information: public libraries, cybercafés, telecenters, and other locations (such as private and religious libraries).

Local research teams used a combination of research methods to: (1) observe how people access information; (2) conduct surveys in information venues where they interviewed operators and users; and (3) perform secondary research and analysis of existing reports and documents using both local and international sources. Teams combined site visits and interviews to review the physical infrastructure and human resources of a variety of venues, and to determine the information content, service usage patterns, communication, and knowledge development. Additionally, teams examined the effects of environmental factors such as government policies, geography, and ethnic and linguistic differences.

Definitions

ACE scoring framework: Developed by CIS based on a modified bridges.org Real Access framework. The scale goes from zero to five, with 5 being the best possible score. ACE scores are calculated by evaluating dozens of variables having to do with ICT access, capacity and environment in public access ICT venues. “Access” includes variables such as accessibility, suitability, affordability, and the availability of technology; “capacity” includes training, relevant content and services, social appropriation, and collaboration capacity; and “environment” includes socio-cultural factors, popular support, political will, and a country’s legal and regulatory framework.

Challenges ahead (from table on front page): Estimates based on combinations of ACE scores indicating difficulty in improving country’s public access to ICT. From the fewest challenges to most, categories are: quick wins, steady gains, slow gains, and significant.

CIS: University of Washington Center for Information & Society (CIS)

Cybercafés: Distribution based upon connectivity, but mostly located in urban areas and their outskirts; also in highly populated towns in the countryside.

E-readiness: The ability to use ICT for economic development, as determined by measures of connectivity and technology infrastructure, business environment, social and cultural environment, legal environment, government policy and vision, and consumer and business adoption. E-readiness is scored on a scale from 1 to 10. In 2008, the global e-readiness score was 6.4, with the highest levels in North America and the lowest in Africa and Asia.

Gini coefficient: Measures the inequality of income distribution. A low coefficient indicates more equal income distribution, while a high Gini coefficient indicates more unequal distribution. The global average is around 0.6; the US gini is around 0.45.

ICTs: Information and communication technologies (especially computers and the Internet).

Needs & Readiness indexes (from table on front page): The needs index is comprised of three indicators: inequality, ICT usage and ICT cost. The readiness index is also comprised of three indicators: politics, skills and ICT infrastructure. Proxies are used for all indicators. See “Information Needs & Watering Holes” on the CIS Landscape Study website (www.cis.washington.edu/landscape) for a more detailed discussion of these indexes and proxies.

NGO: Non-governmental organization

Non-urban: Commonly labeled a rural area, but definitions of rural or periurban vary by country.

Public libraries: Most public libraries are designed to help the public educational system, usually elementary and high schools; no national library system that provides book exchanges, and books are not allowed out of libraries.

Telecenters: Three main types: Institute of Telecommunications (Indotel), called *Training Centers on Informatics* (CCI); *Virtual Classrooms of the State Secretary on Education* (AVEs); and *Community Technological Centers* (CTC) located in rural areas.

Front photo: Municipal library of Santo Domingo. Photo courtesy of Sula Batsu.