Corporate libraries can be an integral part of the research and development effort, connecting teams, expanding expertise and supporting the mission of the corporation. The Technical Information Center in the Institute of Venezuelan Technology for Petroleum (Intvep), the R&D subsidiary of Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA) is one such corporate library, a success story based on close collaboration with its users.

Part of the Venezuelan state-owned oil and natural gas company, Intvep’s 1500 employees undertake projects in petroleum exploration, refining and production. Intvep was created in 1974, and the Technical Information Center opened the following year. Then, as now, its mission was to fully support the company’s research and development efforts. According to Boris Bracho, Collection Development Leader and Deputy Manager of the Information Center, the library has grown steadily in both the size of its collection and its staff.

Since its inception, the Technical Information Center has recognized the value of books in supporting research. It has built a library of titles that support its patrons, ensuring that their needs are met throughout the research process. The foundational content contained in books provides context that can lead to new depth and quality of R&D efforts. The Center’s researchers continue to benefit from the credible and interdisciplinary information obtained from books in the Center’s library. And the librarians are assured that they are creating the best research opportunities for their scientists and engineers.

“We now have 40,000 books in our print collection, as well as more than 30,000 electronic documents including e-books, scanned theses, engineering and construction project documentation, technical reports and technical notes,” he explained. “We have a 25-person library staff, working in informatics, translations and other duties. Six members of the staff are trained librarians, ready and eager to provide our company’s researchers with the resources they need.” Bracho is part of a five-to-eight-person committee – library experts, engineers and others – that determines what the library must add to its collection to yield the greatest benefit to its users.

Bracho noted that the library works closely with its research and development constituents to make sure they receive the most accurate and timely information they need to support their work. The library also has created an institutional database of the technical and scientific developments that have come out of the Institute, a valuable asset to both current and future projects. The library does research analysis as well, yet another advantage available to the Institute’s employees.
Challenges and Opportunities

Like all libraries, the Technical Information Center must cope with funding challenges. The Venezuelan economy continues to struggle due to the ongoing reductions in oil prices during the past three years. Thankfully, the library has maintained its stability during this time, and is working to raise its profile both internally and externally.

“We sponsor summits, conferences and technical support days, to broaden awareness of the library within the Institute and also among the larger corporation. We need to do more of this,” added Bracho. “We are also focusing on an increased use of technology, reaching out to our audience with social media and on their smartphones. We recognize that we must communicate with these technology and science experts in ways that are most appealing and useful to them.”

Library Use Is Not Limited to Corporate R&D

Intvep’s Technical Information Center is in the somewhat unique situation of serving not only a corporate office, but also students. “We have the University of Hydrocarbons on site, so we are available for their academic needs,” according to Bracho. “We also have relationships with eight other educational institutions, enabling their students to use our resources as necessary. It is important to share content, particularly our vast library of books, with this next generation of science and technology talent.”

Success Results from Measurement and Improvement

Bracho said there are many ways to determine the impact of the library. The Technical Information Center uses ISO 9001 standards to measure its usage and to improve quality. Library usage is fundamental to its value and growth. Bracho pointed to the fact that they are in the process of hiring four new library experts as proof of the library’s significance to the Institute.

“I would recommend to other corporate libraries that they have a robust electronic network, state-of-the-art tools, and a diverse collection covering many technical and scientific topics,” Bracho emphasized. “It is important that the library’s technical information is permanent, and does not have an expiration date.”

The Center works with Elsevier and other providers to fulfill its content needs. It relies on Elsevier for book collections, individual books, and numerous Major Reference Works. The institute also has obtained access to Elsevier’s Reference Module in Materials Science and Materials Engineering, and the Reference Module in Chemistry, Molecular Sciences and Chemical Engineering. The Reference Modules provide authoritative content that is continuously reviewed, updated, commissioned, and date-stamped.

There is no end in sight to the growth of petroleum research, and corporate libraries like Venezuela’s Technical Information Center will continue to play a vital role in the outcomes of that research and the success of future industry developments.

Take-Aways for Corporate Librarians

- Work closely with constituents to provide the right resources for success
- Diversify your collection
- Create a robust electronic network
- Offer other services that highlight the library’s role within the organization
- Sponsor in-house events to raise the library’s profile
- Incorporate social and personal technologies to increase user appeal
- Explore relationships with local educational institutions
- Measure your impact