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PROJECT : BRAZILIAN REPUBLICAN HISTORY REFERENCE CENTER

Maria Alice Rezende de Carvalho, and Anelise Pacheco

Instituto Universitário de Pesquisas do Rio de Janeiro, BRA

http://republicaonline.org.br

Abstract (EN)

The site **Republica on-line** was conceived to publicize documents and   historical documents and registers related to the brazilian Republic, from its origins in 1889 till the end of the fifties of the last century. Its content ranges from photographs to news, public and private correspondence, charges, speeches, musical scores, and a series of other illustrative items of the social, economic, political and cultural trajectory of the country in its first fifty years of republican life. It is addressed mainly to teachers and students of the public sector. And it constitutes one of the most important instrument of democratization of access to the brazilian historical information.

Keywords : Educational Tool, Brazilian Republican History, Collaboration School/University

Zusammenfassung (DE)

Die Webseite *Republica Online* wurde zur Verbreitung historischer Texte und Aufzeichnungen entworfen, die mit der brasilianischen Republik, von ihren Anfängen 1889 bis zum Ende der 50er Jahre des letzten Jahrhunderts, im Zusammenhang stehen. Die Seite beinhaltet Fotografien, Zeitungsartikel, öffentliche und private Korrespondenzen, Karikaturen, Reden, Partituren und anderes illustratives Material der sozialen, wirtschaftlichen, politischen und kulturellen Entwicklung des Landes in den ersten 50 Jahren seiner republikanischen Ära. *Republica Online* ist vorwiegend bestimmt für Lehrer und Schüler sowie Studenten des öffentlichen Erziehungswesens und gründet auf eines der wichtigsten Instrumente der Demokratisierung, dem Zugang zu Informationen über die Geschichte Brasiliens.

Schüsselwörter : Erziehungsinstrument, brasilianische Republik, Zusammenarbeit Universität - Schule

Résumé (FR)

Le site Republica on-line a été conçu pour diffuser des documents et des registres historiques en relation avec le période de la République brésilienne, dès ses origines en 1889 jusqu´à la fin des années 1950. Il contient des photographies, des articles de journaux, des correspondences publiques et privées, des caricatures, des discours, des partitions musicales et une série d'items

illustratifs de la trajectoire sociale, économique, politique et culturelle du pays dans ses premières cinquante années de vie républicaine. Il s'adresse principalement aux enseignants et aux étudiants de l´école publique. Ce site constitue un des instruments les plus importants de démocratisation de l'accès à l´information historique brésilienne.

Mots clés: Histoire de la République Brésilienne, Ressource éducative en ligne, collaboration Université/École

I. Introduction

The site **Republica on-line** was conceived from a diagnosis of the necessity to build an education instrument of low cost, that could help teachers and students of the public sector of education in Brazil, and whose territorial extension has great social-economic regional variations.

Apart from that, it was taken into account the importance of the historical knowledge and the raise of value of the characteristics of the brazilian civilization in order to build a democratic society, aware of its problems and of the institutional means that it disposes to overcome them.

Considering these two main objectives – mass education and consolidation of citizenship – it was developed a project of diffusion of the brazilian republican history, based on the contemporary technological resources. As the development of the sector of telecommunications in Brazil allowed, the conception of <u>a national network of research and education,</u> essential to the accomplishment of the project, was initiated.

The site **Republica on-line** started to be built in 1999, based on three criterions:

- Provide the elements to ease the elaboration of a brazilian republican history by the ones who received it, and not a finished version of the recent trajectory of the country;

- Articulate the university activity of research and production of knowledge to the necessities of a basic formation of children and poor adolescents, that constitute the main client of the public education network.

- Promote the increase in value of the regional histories and the local traditions with respect to the consolidation of the brazilian Republic, reinforcing therefore the federative perspective, till then absent from the education of brazilian history.

These criterions determined, therefore, some strategic options in the process of building the site. First of all, the option was made on the presentation of documents and registers related to the republican period, and not on a fixed historical narrative, "closed" and conclusive. It was expected with this strategy that the knowledge about the Republic would be produced in an interactive way, based on observation and on the critical reconstruction of the material presented, raising the value of the context of the discussions in classrooms.

Secondly, the attribution of selection and treatment of the documental *corpus* was given to senior social scientists of different universities and research centers in Brazil, consolidating the greater

experience of articulation between the highest quality of university production and the reproduction of knowledge in schools, ever done in the country.

Finally, there was a descentralization of research procedures, collection and treatment of the documental *corpus*, by the creation of regional input data centres, articulated in a network, to the central coordination. The purpose of this descentralization was to incorporate different regional references to the national narrative about the Republic.

After 5 years of activity, **Republica on-line**, has brought together the work of the 20 more acclaimed brazilian intellectuals in different areas of specialization. It has built four different regional centers of research with circa of 15 junior researchers in training, promoted more than twenty seminars and workshops with teachers of the national technical schools, with managers of the public education network and the private school teachers trade union.

II. The Methodology

The relevance of the project lies not only in the fact that it unites virtually an extraordinary heritage of documents, that is found in different public and private institutions, but first and foremost it gives to each document a content treatment in order to make it more comprehensible to the contemporary public.

Given the volume, the diversity, the "temporality" of the documentation that would be shown electronically, it was developed a methodology of selection and treatment of information, that, generally speaking, assumes the production of <u>universes of sense,</u> from where the documental text could establish communication with the contemporary public.

In a few words, this procedure caused the production of a structure <u>of significance</u> of the information in 4 levels:

a)<u>the historical level </u>inscribes the information in a tradition of research and production of knowledge, covering the lines of more contemporary frequency, as it is the case of economic history, or cultural history, till those that are in decline, like the administrative history, for example;

b)<u>the thematic level</u> is the moment when the great historiographic level suffers a reduction, and themes of more relevance, such as "industrialization" in the case of economic history, are priviledged;

c)the conceptual level differs from the two precedent plans due to the fact that its characterization does not refer only to its reach. It contains a distinct nature, since it requires capacity of abstraction. Therefore, it is up to the one who is classifying the document to recognize what meant the terms present in the document.

 d)the communicational level is the one that tries to inscribe the information in the debate caused by it, collecting the tracks of circulation and of speakers that participated in the process, as well identifying the way it was received by them.

It was, therefore, this experience of elaboration of paradidactic instrument, as the site, tested throughout workshops with teachers of the public network of the city of Rio de Janeiro, that proved the complexity of the undertaking and the absolute necessity of a critical reflexion over the collection of meanings widely used, when concepts of the republican trajectory are mobilized.

III. The Intellectual Construction of the Project

The argentian writer Jorge Luis Borges, in one of his brilliant essays – La Esfera Pascal – presents the following hypothesis : *Maybe the universal history is the history of some metaphors*. As he proposes this hypothesis, Borges gives a stronger and basic sense to the idea of metaphor : some of them would have the capacity of creating vast and complex ways of sensibility and configuration of the world.

The suggestion of Borges coincides with the treatment given by recent reflexions with respect to the role of metaphors. Richard Brown, for example, designates as *a root metaphor* one "fundamental image of the world, from which we extract models of perception or as a proposition, frequently implicit, with respect to things that configurate the world, the way how they act and the way how they can be known". Mark Turner, in his turn, proposes the expression basic metaphor as a kind that "presides the definition of other metaphors, through the establishment of a matrix structure, profoundly penetrated in our conceptual systems". Finally, Max Black talks about *strong metaphors*, that would be emphatic and resonant.

In all the above approaches, a collection of metaphors is presented as having specific properties. In a few words, they define ways of reality and patterns of language that end by structuring the field where the controversies will establish.

IV. The Project

Initially, all the documents came from the Museu da República collection. Therefore in the entrance of the site, the user can choose to see only the documents that are located in Museu da República (*Conhecendo o Museu da República)*, or all the documents collected, including the ones from Museu da República (*RepublicaonLine)*.(See Illustration I).
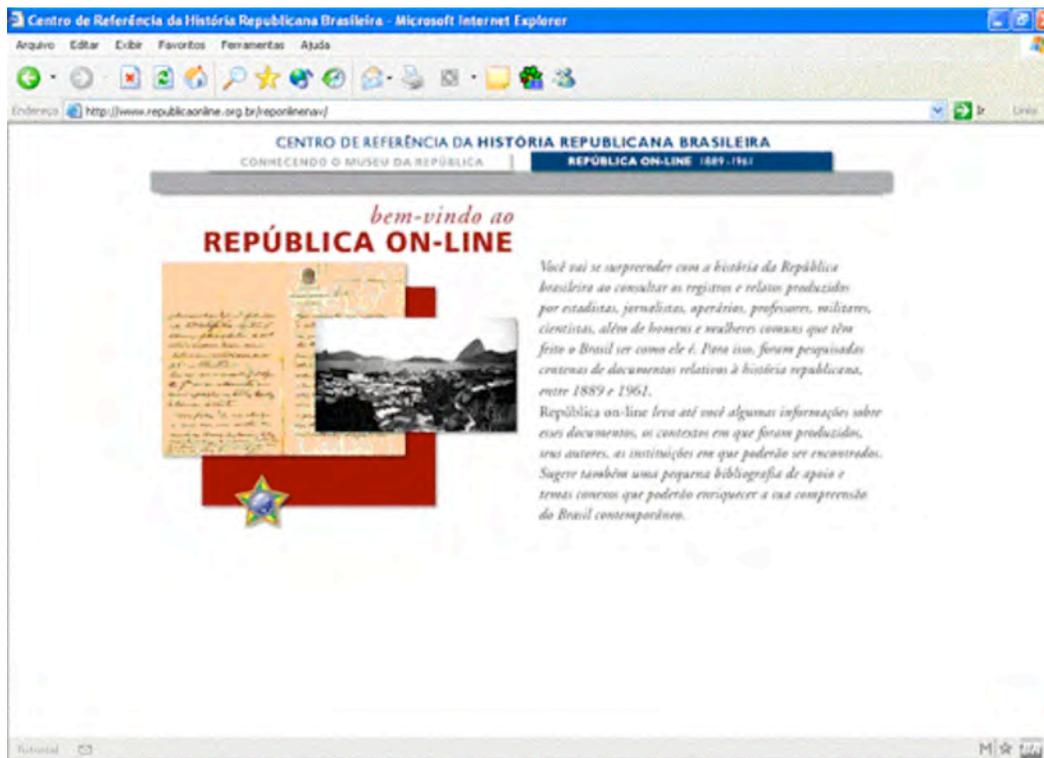

Illustration I

As it was described in section II, the conceptual kernel of the database is the document itself, with the description of its content and where it can be found, with all the technical detailed information of the institution where it is located, and also an associated entry that describes the period of time and events related to the document.

There are eleven categories where a document can be inscribed in. They are, respectively:

- Culture, Art and Science

- Economy and Finance

- Education, Health and Security

- Events and relevant facts

- Press and public opinion

- Legislation

- Ministries

- Social and Political Movements

- Political and social organizations

- Characters and social actors

- Private Life

Also, in the entrance of the site, the user can do his research by year of interest, subject(chosen from a wide list of the most searched by students), character(chosen from a list of the major Brazilian republican characters) and institution(by viewing all the research content of a particular university or research institution).(See Illustration II)

Illustration II

Throughout the site, it can be remarked the existence of a fixed *heading* with the following

options:

- Presidencies

- Periods of Time

- Themes of Research

- Bibliographic Suggestions

- Iconography

- Links

The option *Presidencies* refers to all the eighteen presidents of Brazil from the proclamation of

the Republic in 1889, till the transference of the capital to Brasília in 1960. For each presidential

period, there is a small biography of the president in question, a succinct explanation of the

presidential period, and one or more of the eleven categories that may have documents related to

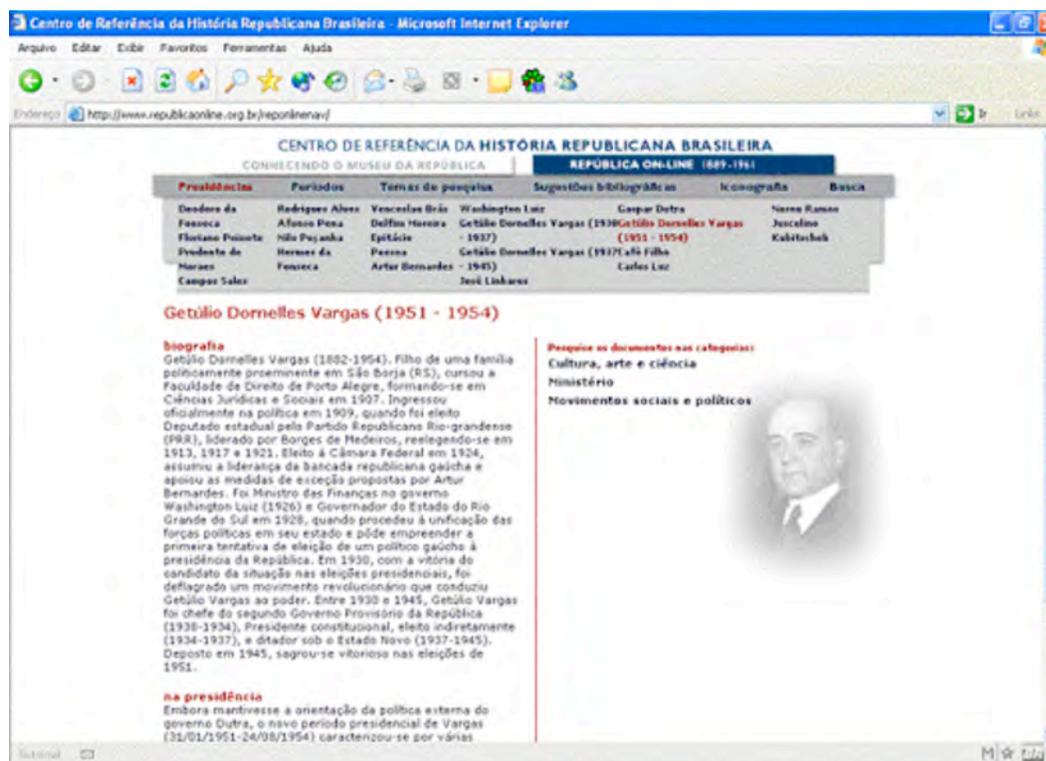the president in question. (see Illustration III)

Illustration III

The option *Periods of Time* refers to the logical historical periods, usually periods of transition of the Republic in Brazil, that do not necessarily coincide with the chronological presidencies of the Presidents.

The option *Themes of Research* refers to themes that are not usually found in traditional historiographic reference for school students such as *racism*, *feminism*, etc.

The option *Bibliographic Suggestions* refers to the republican canonic bibliographic. Or else, the basic bibliography that all students should read.

The option *Iconography* refers to all the historical iconography collected in the research. For example, Museu da República has in its collection all the photographies taken in *Guerra de Canudos*, two centuries ago.(See Illustration IV)

Illustration IV

As it can be seen, together with the photograph, there is a description of the author, of the place and the date when the photograph was taken. A small description of the episode of the subject in question, some bibliography and all the technical reference of the place of the document in the institution where it is located, as well as the state of conservation are also mentioned. Through the arrows, the user can also navigate through more photos related to the same subject.

Finally, the option links refers to other interesting sites related to the republican history.

V. The Implementation

The overall purpose of the project is to establish a network between the main federal universities of Brasil and IUPERJ, using the methodology developed by IUPERJ. (the regional universities will have the task to establish a solid partnership with the public education network)

The specific goals are, as follows:
- To aggregate federal universities as partners that will enrich the site with entries, as well as with academic and political commitment;
- To enlarge significantly the number of documents that are referenced in the Brazilian Republican History Reference Center;
- To promote research and continuous collaboration between research institutions, in order to raise the interest of students and teachers in the theme Brazilian Republican History, that is usually only taught when the student is about to enter university.
- To publicize locally and regionally the content of the site Brazilian Republican History Reference Center.

The obligations of IUPERJ are:
- To transfer the methodology of entrance of data in the database of the site Brazilian Republican History Reference Center;
- To train and give support to researchers designated by the university to develop the project locally;
- To guarantee the technical operation of the site and provide support to the database;

- Donate a computer to the university;

- Donate scholarships to junior researchers;

The obligations of the university are:

- Assign a senior researcher with Phd to coordinate the project;

- Assign 4(four) junior researchers that will collect the documents in the institutions and make the entrance of data in the database;

- Allocate the computer donated specifically for the project;

- Allocate a special room in the Department of History for the project;

- Organize regional seminars with all the public education network;

- Produce a CD-Rom at the end of the research;

- Obey the periods of time designated for each task;

- Obey the period of time of 1(one) year of the project.

As the central coordination is done by IUPERJ, an electronic bureau was built.

Only the central coordinator has the power to approve an entry to the database.

In the electronic bureau, the coordinator is able to see all the entries that have been done, send messages to all the members of the project and make changes to entries(delete, modify).(See Illustration V).
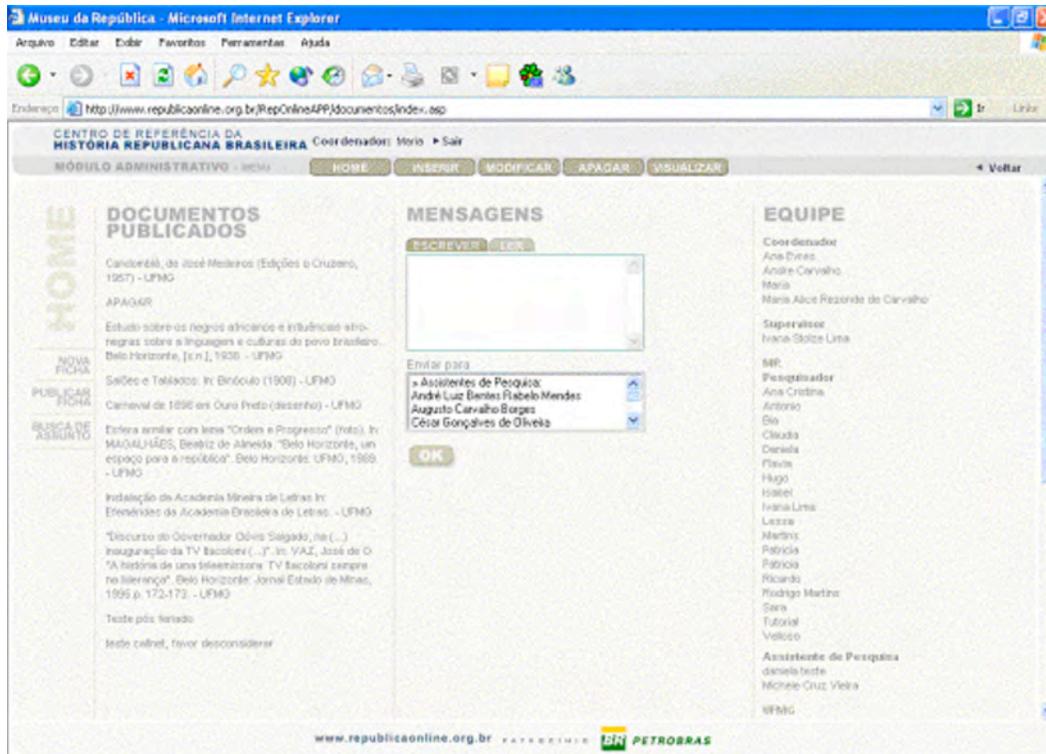
Illustration V

All the entries are usually initiated by the junior researchers. Each entry is associated to a particular researcher so that the local coordinator and the central coordinator have control over the production. To make an entry, the first thing the junior coordinator must fill are the fields : Presidential Period, Category, Theme, Subject, and a description of the subject. He can erase, alter and visualize it. After he has finished with all the information he must fill in other screens, he can send it to his local coordinator.(See Illustration VI)
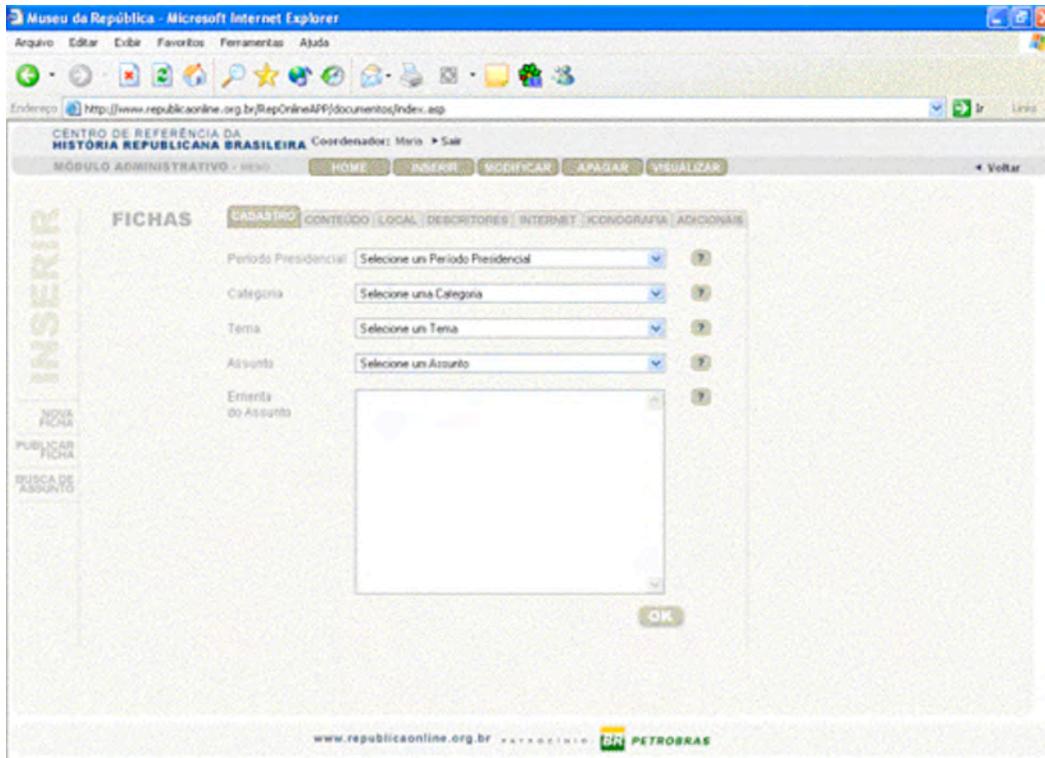
Illustration VI

The local coordinator can at any time visualize the status of the database of his university. (See Illustration VII)

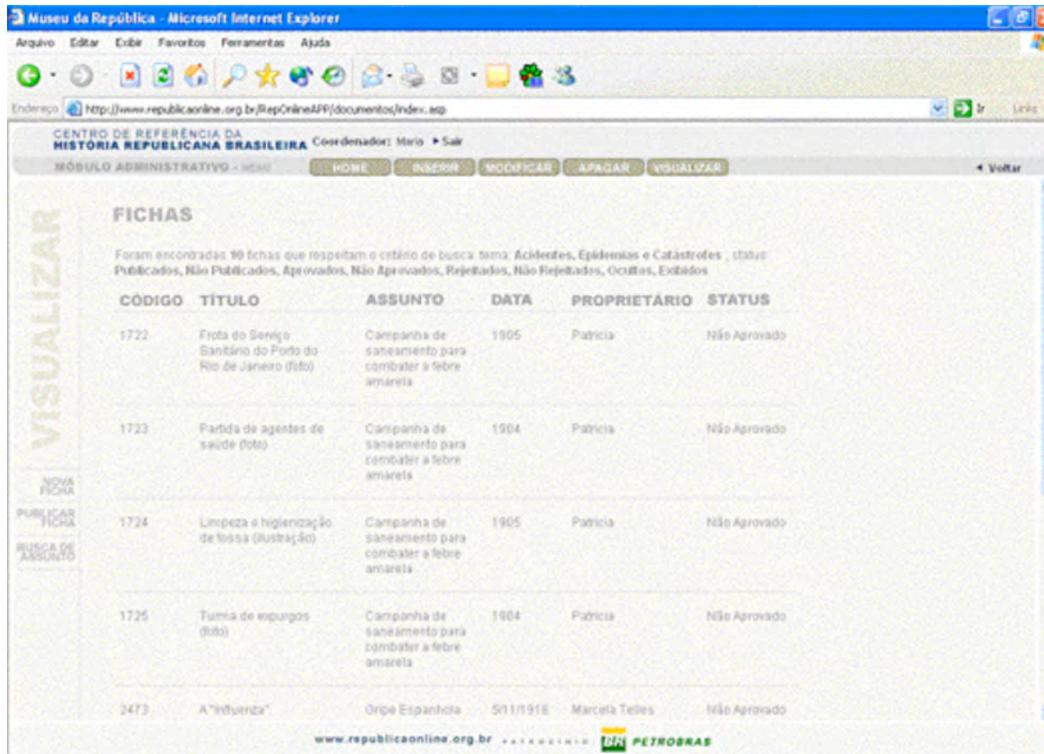But only the central coordinator has an overall view of all university partners.

Illustration VII

VI. Final Considerations

The project Brazilian Republican History Reference Center, coordinated by *Instituto Universitário de Pesquisas do Rio de Janeiro* (*IUPERJ*), has as its main objective the entrance of new data and the promotion of a website that gathers information of the most significant documents of the brazilian republican history, that are scattered or even lost in many research institutions of Brazil. Each one of the documents of the research is linked to an entry, to biographies of historical characters and to bibliographic suggestions. There is also information that refers to the context that the document was produced and to the institution where it can be found.

Initially, all the entrance of data came from the collection of Museu da República (the original purpose of the project was to collect and organize historical information of a period when Museu da República was the seat of the Presidence of the Republic). In this first phase only researchers from Rio de Janeiro and research institutes from Rio de Janeiro were involved. In the following phase, other states of Brazil were invited to participate in the project. The states that were

incorporated in the project were : Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul e Pará. The next step is to incorporate the states of : Pernambuco, Bahia and São Paulo.

The website wishes, in an ample spectre, to furnish a significant pannel of Brazil, since the proclamation of the Republic till the end of the government of Juscelino Kubitschek, when the capital was transfered from Rio de Janeiro to Brasília.

As the universities got integrated in the project, a significant leap of quality occured since they were able to aggregate to the data base a diverse content from the historical specificities that compose the federative expression of the Brazilian Republic. They also act as effective centers of promotion of the republican trajectory in the different states they are situated. The participation of the universities in the construction of the website has in fact stimulated the research and promoted the interest, locally and regionally, in the history of the Republic of Brazil.

An important contribution of this project to society, apart from making the catalogation and collection of a historical patrimony that is scattered, lost and in misuse in institutions all over Brazil, is that it unites school and university in a proficuous partnership. It puts these two institutions, that have not effectively interacted for a long time, in a partnership that has only one goal : effective and efficient education for everybody. Maybe this is the route to follow if we pursue development, growth, and social equity for Brazil.