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Disseminating Knowledge About North America From Flyers to Instagram

Thirty years: a whole working lifetime for many of the colleagues who began this adventure and a professional commitment for those of us who have joined along the way. It has also been 30 years in which dizzying technological, epistemological, and methodological advances have been made in all the disciplines, and especially intensely in the area of dissemination and popularization of scientific and academic knowledge.

Making the transition from traditional strategies and instruments of dissemination to contemporary digital tools has been a challenge for adapting and a test of the resilience of those of us who have taken on the task. It is

easily said, but it requires an enormous mental effort and many learning experiences to adapt to the lightening-paced evolution in disseminating and creating a presence, moving from traditional print media, such as the less and less frequent posters, triptychs, and pamphlets, to today's social networks with all their immense digital and virtual possibilities.

Moving from traditional printed books to reading on different and increasingly versatile electronic devices or to broadcasting academic events through video-conference or streaming, plus electronic pages like information and communication portals, presupposes a transformation almost as radical as the Copernican revolution in the sciences and philosophy. Doing it implies a change in mentality and an effort in adaptation, not only by

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those who work as disseminators, but also by our target audiences.

Today a video uploaded to YouTube can have more impact than a lecture to a full house; audiovisual discourses prevail over texts and concepts, and reading habits and practices and access to information have been radically transformed. Times have been shortened and distances reduced. Today, being timely has more value than perfection; coverage is more important than focus; visibility, more than selectivity. Nevertheless, technology also gives us the possibility that that symbolic keynote address can be seen simultaneously in many places by many audiences, although, generationally speaking, some of us still prefer visual contact and being in the same room with the speaker.

The new paradigm of social communication seems to be connecting more than informing, selling, or entertaining. Immediacy and perhaps also the ephemeral are advancing on the traditional place of paused reflection and reasoned discussion and debate. That is why the challenge of disseminating academic content is more and more demanding and complex every day. The idea is to be present in the largest number of places and times possible, to achieve greater visibility and obtain better positioning in the field of intense global competition for content, but at the same time to foster and make known high-quality research results. These results have necessarily traveled a slow, winding road of analysis, reflection, state-of-the-art review, formulation and proof of hypotheses, fieldwork, and discussion with peers, including peer review, which are the irreplaceable underpinnings of the generation of knowledge.

In this context, the anniversary of an academic center is always a reason for celebration and also for reflection about the work done. It is also an excellent opportunity to rethink its challenges. The CISAN is celebrating 30 years of generating rigorous—but also creative—research, of dealing with different problems, and of deepening the knowledge about the three countries of the region, with the idea of contributing to the construction of a trilateral agenda with common themes, as well as delving into each country's specificities in order to achieve better mutual understanding.

Dissemination is fundamental for the results of our daily work to be distributed to specialized audiences, such as students, professors and researchers, and craft-

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ers of public policy. It is also important that they reach society in general so that, ideally, that knowledge can be useful for all: the idea is not to create it and accumulate it in closed circles, but rather to maximize its social function.

In addition to dissemination, through popularization, we can reach broader audiences through the interpretation or translation in the hermeneutic sense into language accessible for people outside the specialized fields, that is, to transmit it in a way that facilitates comprehension. We university popularizers need all the possibilities that technology offers us and also to create synergies among teachers, researchers, and students to have the inputs that we want to transmit.

Dissemination is one of our university's three central functions, and the CISAN has an ongoing commitment to this task. We carry out a vast program of academic extension and continuous education activities every year in order to put in the hands of Mexican society all the products derived from our research and to make our daily work known. We do this through seminars, colloquia, analytical roundtable discussions, courses, workshops, and diploma courses about the most important topics, whether at a specific juncture or because of their impact on the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres of North America. In these 30 years, all of them have gone through dizzying transformations regionally, and undoubtedly in their role on the international stage.

Throughout these three decades, in the CISAN we have worked consistently to attract those interested in our field of studies and to link up with government bodies and civil society to try to reach broader audiences. We have fruitfully strengthened interinstitutional relations with numerous U.S. and Canadian universities. And we have done the same with state universities in Mexico and beyond our national and regional boundaries, making our mission more visible.

The use of the media in the popularization and promotion of the culture of scientific and academic knowledge has become very important in an era in which media like television, radio, Internet, and the social networks for the new generations are an inherent part of today's individuals and societies. In this sense, our presence in the media has been the challenge of positioning ourselves as the most important experts in the area, with the participation of all the researchers for the analysis of the issues in their different specialties.

For part of these 30 years, we had air time on the program "North America Today: Society, Politics, and Culture," broadcast on Radio UNAM. Although no longer on the air, this program was undoubtedly an important aspect of making our center better known. We also participated in university television with an annual week of episodes of the program *University Viewpoint*, coordinated by the Open University and Distance Learning Coordination Office and TVUNAM. Beginning in 2018, the monthly program *North American Viewpoint* was created, broadcast on the last Sunday of every month. This very special space has become a valuable window through which to debate current issues with CISAN researchers and colleagues from other university institutions.

Our institutional web site holds all the information about the CISAN, including the catalogue of publications and access to the pages of the MiCisan repository, the Rosa Cusminsky Mogilner Library, the academic journal *Norteamérica*, and the popular magazine *Voices of Mexico*. The portal also has its own English-language version.

Undoubtedly, social networks are today the main means of dissemination, which is why we are present on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. On these digital platforms, we disseminate our academic activities, publications, interviews with researchers, articles about the

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North American region, and photo-stories about our day-to-day work, maintaining close interaction with our followers.

In the last year, the CISAN launched an initiative to create a research network of specialists in North America, called Redan. The aim is to join forces to make it possible to socialize research results and the very different experiences in academia regarding the study of the region, thus creating an incentive for interinstitutional links and dialogue among peers. This network is an important resource for dissemination because of its potential in propagating knowledge about our field of studies nationally, regionally, and internationally by promoting individual and institutional links on a global level.

The Area of Research Dissemination and Popularization has the objective of defining and implementing the main strategies and tasks that can be developed for making the research done at the center known, and to promote the products derived from all the academic activities carried out. This is to aid in fulfilling the CISAN's mission: "The generation of cutting-edge knowledge to deal with national and global problems by deepening our understanding of priority issues for specialized knowledge of the United States and Canada and the relations of Mexico with them both. We do this by carrying out inter- and transdisciplinary research, complemented with teaching, extension, dissemination, and networking activities as the National Autonomous University of Mexico's substantive aims, which allow us to meet the challenges that today's world poses for humanity."

Much remains to be done in dissemination and popularization to increase our visibility and have an impact on public policies and other spheres of national and regional life. Nevertheless, we should also underline that, along the way, we have gained a great deal of ground in teaching, training human resources, and generating highly specialized products, and dissemination has been fundamental in this. We can say that the CISAN has positioned itself and consolidated as a unique center, above all because of its vocation of studying our geopolitical surroundings using a multi- and interdisciplinary approach embedded in the social sciences and the humanities. Our horizons consist of remaining at the cutting edge with relevant research proposals that attempt to meet the challenges we have faced for these 30 fruitful years and gaining greater visibility for our day-to-day work. ■■■