

## **Parallel session 5: PCST challenges and tools directed to young people**

### **A POPULARIZATION OF SCIENCE MAGAZINE FOR TEENAGERS**

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#### **Abstract**

*¿Cómo Ves?* is a magazine edited by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, UNAM, with the purpose of offering its readers (mostly teenagers) a true and comprehensive panorama of different scientific themes.

*¿Cómo Ves?* has been published, in a monthly basis, for more than five years, which in Mexico, a country where science themes are almost non existent in the media, is a great achievement. With the idea of making it accesible to low income students, it is the cheapest popularization of science magazine in the country. This is possible because 70% of the cost of the magazine is financed by the UNAM and 30% by the readers.

**Key words:** popularization of science magazine

#### **Text:**

*¿Cómo Ves?* is a monthly magazine of the Dirección General de Divulgación de la Ciencia, an institution of the UNAM, and has been published monthly without interruption since december 1998.

#### **Objectives**

The main objective of the magazine is to give our readers a true and comprehensive panorama of different scientific themes. We are convinced that popularization of science is much more than a translation of a complex language to a more understandable one, or just a way to simplify scientific knowledge in order to make it more digestible. Our aim is that our readers understand the way science explains the world, and the paths science is obliged to travel in order to achieve its objectives, its methods and procedures, how scientific knowledge is validated, and that this knowledge is continually changing.

#### **Methods**

The magazine is divided in 15 sections (among others, science news, books, movies and web pages reviews, history of science and technology, a page written by students) and five articles.

We have a group of seven senior editors, and the editorial staff is integrated by five persons (editor, assistant editor, chief of information, chief of redaction, and designer), and two editorial assistants.

The articles are written by scientists, teachers and journalists. Each article is examined by the staff and the editorial assistants. If accepted, we ask the authors to make the changes we think the article needs. The author has to go through and accept, the final version of the article and of the images we suggest.

## **Results**

In more than five years, *¿Cómo Ves?* has been able to position itself in a very competitive editorial market and is recognized as a magazine that offers attractive articles for teenagers, with the depth and precision that scientific themes require. We publish 17,000 magazines monthly and it is 40 pages long.

Our readers are mainly students, but the magazine is also read by teachers, scientists and other professionals. It is also distributed by the Ministry of Public Education in 600 public school libraries.

We are very interested in communicating with our readers, and we constantly receive letters in our e-mail address, asking questions or suggesting themes. We take them into account when we are planning future contents.

Last year *¿Cómo Ves?* obtained an important recognition, awarded by UNESCO and the Red de Popularización de la Ciencia y la Tecnología para América Latina y el Caribe, for the best popularization of science programme.

## **Conclusions**

The main conclusion we have, is that there are many young persons interested in science, willing to make an effort to try to understand complex problems, if their interests are taken into account, and the different themes are treated with depth and are well explained. This is truly amazing, if you take a look at the lack of popularization of science materials that reach the media in Mexico. For example, in open television, that is what the vast majority of people consume, programmes with scientific contents, account for less than 1.5% of the total. And almost all of these, are not produced in Mexico.

A project like this magazine, depends on the quality of its contents, and this is made possible by the support we get from the scientific community, specially from the researchers from the UNAM.

We feel it is very important for the magazine to talk about mexican scientists, what they are working on, what worries them, and how they contribute to the development of Mexico.

One of our most important objectives is to reach to low income students, and that is made possible with the financial support of the University.

It would have been imposible for *¿Cómo Ves?* to reach our readers if this magazine was not project of the Dirección General de Divulgación de la Ciencia, an institution that for more than 30 years has been developing popularization of science programmes in museums, magazines, books, radio and television.

## **Lessons learned**

In five years, we have learned about the weight the images and the design have on our readers, specially because they are mainly students, and if they

don't like the way the magazine looks like, probably they won't take the trouble of reading it.

We have also learned that our duty is not only to inform, but to transmit the passion we feel for science. *¿Cómo Ves?* is not a scientific journal, so we need to learn to reach not only our reader's minds, but also their hearts. Our best articles were written by authors that have a lot of information, but also have a vast culture, can write well and love the theme they are writing about.

