

**Parallel Session 8: The role of books and literature in public
communication of science**

**NEW WAYS OF COMMUNICATION IN POPULAR SCIENCE
MAGAZINES.**

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Quo magazine has already celebrated its 100th issue introducing a very special way of making scientific divulgation, with a personal view about communicating science differently from the traditional path. When it came to the market in 1995 there was no precedent in the Spanish media. Divulgation magazines had a classical layout presenting topics and developing them. They did not take advantage of new computing capabilities applied to magazine edition, such as illustration and images modification applications. The coming out of Quo magazine represented a new point of view for many other graphic magazines in Spain, not only for those dedicated to divulgation; and this new point of view made them change their criteria because of its success.

Although Quo dealt with many the same topics than others in the market, the way it treated them had an innovative planing. The main topic for issue Nr 1 was instinct behaviors in human beings. Nevertheless, the study was completely original, since the headline was: "The animal inside us". It was explained graphically by a man face with a magnifying glass making its eye bigger. Into the lens one could see the eye of a wild feline. It must be taken into consideration that it was technically a milestone for the time being, that image modifying programs were at their starting point then and that both the idea and its making out were really amazing.

This is only an example of the turning of the screw that Quo was supposed to be given from the very beginning, which endowed it with an uncommon personality that is still mantaining through its seven years of existence.

Precisely, this singular case is specially significant because of this dialog, whose headline is: "Scientific Knowledge and Cultural Diversity". As I see it, cultural diversity means not only the acceptance of more or less "exotic" cultural traces to the eyes of the Western world, but the singular way we manage all issues related to them. I assume here The word "culture" in another broader meaning than is usually accepted. Through science is already known that cultural traces of an species could become genetic as time goes by, thanks to evolution. With the necessary careful consideration, different points of view can lead to its incorporation to daily practise of communication on science, even to cause a "cultural swing". This has been the big goal of Quo.

Which are the basis of this diversity? Apart from the graphic advances and he new point of view dealing with classical scientific divulgation topics.

Quo has its own developing characteristics. In detail, they are:

-The playful side of news, which had never been used in written scientific divulgation, i. e.: topic: Pollution caused by the Prestige, delisted in the "Passtimes" section of the magazine, which headline was: "This is not a game". We proposed home experiments, guess what games, etc., to make comprehensible the consequences of pollution due to hydrocarbon. Another example: we show a series of images: "We Explore the Rarest Planet". In the first six pages amazing images of vulcanology, gravity, temperature can be seen... Which planet are we in? Is a question for the reader to be answered: The Earth.

-Interactivity. Communication among Quo and its readers can be called, at least, as surprising. Usually, no less than three contests are proposed in every issue of our magazine, all related to science. There is a whole section (called "Quonnected") made in a big part by readers who send their questions and quizzes, their solutions to every proposal and challenge. The response has been amazing: readers have sent papyroflexia objects, a home-made plane, a raw egg by mail, a boat made out of clay and ears made out of almost anything (to celebrate the anniversary of Van Gogh). The answer is massive: readers invade the redaction of Quo with their inventions and proposals.

-Sense of humor and irony. This is a really important aspect of Quo.

Scientific divulgation is usually considered a boring and erudite matter. Just the opposite for a lot of topics, we think at Quo. A recently published article (May 2004) is about ants. Instead of treating the matter in a traditional way, we called it: "The Working Class", illustrated with an image of an ant with a red helmet. Information about ant-hill organization appears like a hierarchic organigram: enterprise, activity, staff... The product manager is the queen, whose personal particulars can be seen, her productivity ratio, her salary, the duration of her contract, etc.

Therefore, you can explain a very serious scientific topic on a humorous basis.

-Seriousness in contents. Quo has been awarded with the recognition of such prestigious prizes as Boehringer, Casa de las Ciencias de A Coruña and Oncology Association. Rigour is that assured in the magazine. Quo reporters are specialised in every branch of science they write of, which has led to be considered as a very prestigious magazine. Quo attends congresses and discussion forums about science and divulgation and it gives its peculiar vision in courses about scientific press.

Thanks to all that, one can conclude by saying that Quo has become a reference in Spanish scientific divulgation and an example of "cultural diversity" on topic treatment.

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