

## **Parallel Session 14: Science in daily press; a cultural question?**

### **DESIGN OF A STUDY ON THE COVERAGE OF SCIENCE NEWS IN SPANISH-WRITING NEWSPAPERS OF AMERICA AND CREATION OF A LATIN AMERICAN NETWORK OF SCIENCE NEWS STUDIES**

*Raimundo Roberts,*

*Scientific Communication Observatory. University Pompeu Fabra, Rambla 30  
– 32, 08002, Barcelona, Spain. Tel: +34-93-542-2446, E-mail:  
[raimundo.roberts@upf.edu](mailto:raimundo.roberts@upf.edu)*

#### **Abstract**

The goal of this proposal is to improve the information about scientific information in newspapers in Latin America. This will abolish the lack of data about the coverage of science and medicine in the newspapers of mayor countries in this region. To run this project, we propose to use the methodologies of "Informe Quiral", an annual study of five major newspapers published in Spain, and developed by Scientific Communication Observatory at the University Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, Spain.

We want to present and discuss this project for the study of scientific news in the Latin American press with others journalists and researchers, and also, involve them in the proposed project by creating a network to develop this study, and to continue monitoring these sources of information on a long-term basis.

#### **Text**

Politics that is oriented to works an integral development of the society, in countries with different levels of development, will benefit it from the investment in education and science, which is fundamental for the progress.

Vladimir of Semir says, "Precisely, when we are in an economic and social process of transformation towards new forms of living together in many aspects of our society, it is very important that the citizens possess the capacity to adapt, because the technological and scientific culture forms part of their daily routine"(1).

From this point of view, the reflection of science in the "public space" trough the media is one of the key elements for its diffusion and social acceptance, besides it should be included in the priority list of the "policy-makers". Science, as well as technology, supposes the creation of knowledge that can and should be applied in order to have a social repercussion. To make this process effective, it is necessary to create a "virtuous circle", formed by the public exposure of the scientific local or international efforts, a strong position of an informed society and a political prioritization of activities, which are directed to the creation and diffusion of the knowledge.

Similar antecedents of studies at an European level exist, like the one carried out by Holliman (5), on the study of newspapers in five European countries, and presented at the PCST Conference of Cape Town, South Africa, in 2002,

or the Informe Quiral (2) that have shown to be a useful source of a large quantity of information.

### Objectives

The proposal of the OCC that we present consists of the execution of a study on the scientific or medical news, in newspapers in various countries of Latin America. In addition, we propose the creation of a network of studies on scientific news, having emerged from this study.

### Methodology:

To study the evolution of the published issues in a specific part of the society, the OCC has implemented a study tool: the Informe Quiral. This study is carried out annually since 1996, and maintains since 1997 the same methodology. This permits us to successfully study the specific development of subjects, especially those of sanitary interest, in a concrete “public space” circumscribed to the newspapers. The Informe Quiral has been able to establish a stable substrate of objective data on the journalistic information in media of greater credibility: the newspapers.

The Informe Quiral has as a like objective the systematic monitorization and the analysis of published texts in the five daily newspapers of greater diffusion in Spain, in relation to health, and medicine and the health. The monitorization of these media is carried out from the material communicated to the readers, through the systematic harvesting of all the information on medicine and health that have been published. From these data, we obtain sufficient information to analyze the most important issues of the year and to understand the structures to produce journalistic information, the ones that determine the form and the fund of what the readers receive daily through the newspapers.

Through the studies carried out in the Informe Quiral, we have been able to establish the evolution of the sanitary themes of an information media group of great coverage, credibility, and with a great impact in the public space, that influences the politicians and the “policy-makers”. The collected data by this publication have been delivered to sanitary decision-makers, and the specialized journalists. Besides, we can affirm that it is a suitable tool of monitoring themes that permits to obtain data and to analyze the “reality” of a specific sector.

The general methodology of analysis of the Informe Quiral is based on the guidelines that are described by Krippendorff (3) for the study of the content in the media and the indicators utilized by Burns et.al. in 1995 (4).

We propose to apply this methodology in different Hispanic countries, to discover who the protagonists of information are, and which are the themes that show more interest in the media. In this way, we propose to establish an international basic study, with the same methodology that we have already tested, on the information that the Hispano-American societies receive in the field of science and medicine.

### Results expected

The results expected of this investigation can be extrapolated from the ones obtained by the Informe Quiral. In first place, have the classification of the

analyzed journalistic texts and, secondly, to have a tool to compare newspapers in different regions or countries.

Furthermore, we would like to analyze and expose in what way the scientific issues are treated in the press, to explain journalistically the professional work of who reports and to stimulate the objective values in scientific communication. On the other hand, it will be possible to determine the themes that most interest have caused and most news have generated in the press, to analyze quantitatively the most important themes, and to carry out a qualitative analysis of the cases that have caused most impact.

In a second phase, we expect that this study will permit us to obtain reliable data to observe the evolution of the journalistic working processes of the themes that more impact have shown.

Also, is viable to monitor and to make comparisons of the development of the scientific journalism in each country of the study. This would be possible thanks to the creation, on one side, of an extensive database that would permit the execution of different studies on the state of science and the scientific journalism, like the one carried out by Revuelta et. al. (6). On the other side, it will permit an exhaustive study on the issues, protagonists and informative flows of the main media of communication.

## **Referentes**

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