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Publishing about Our Region Is Understanding Who We Are

The University Research Program on the United States of America, created in 1988, was the predecessor to the Center for Research on the United States of America (1989) and the Center for Research on North America (CISAN) (1993). The CISAN has consolidated with the aim of generating “cutting-edge knowledge focused on dealing with national and global problems by deepening our understanding of priority issues for specialized knowledge about the United States and Mexico and Mexico’s relations with both. We do this through inter- and transdisciplinary research that, complemented by teaching, extension activities, dissemination of results, and outreach as substantive objectives of the UNAM, allows us to meet the challenges that today’s world poses for humanity.”¹

However, what better way of fostering the generation of knowledge than extension activities and its dissemina-

tion through academic events and, more durably, through publications?

This publishing effort began in 1989, and in 1994, the young CISAN not only published about the United States, but also about Canada and both countries’ relations with Mexico. One very important specificity of this center is precisely the dissemination of studies about Canada.

Three decades after its foundation, the CISAN has consolidated as a reference point for research and the development of trans-disciplinary knowledge for a profound understanding of the political, economic, social, and cultural phenomena of North America. To date, the CISAN’s catalogue boasts 141 books, 16 North American Notebooks, 109 issues of *Voices of Mexico*, and 31 issues of *Norteamérica*.

The catalogue of books built over 30 years, and for several years now through a double-blind peer review process, includes works about the region’s different problems by individual authors, compiled essays, or by two or three co-authors. The issues include, among other topics

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The books were initially published in printed form; today, they have migrated to other formats. Those that are more than five years old are free on open access, and newer works are sold to reach readers beyond our borders.

essential for the region, the systems of government and institutions of each of the countries; the trade agreements among them; economic and political issues; cultural industries (specifically, film, literature, television, and music); history; security; the environment; energy policy; the border, the Chicano community; human rights; elections; narratives; socio-cybernetics; necro-politics; health; and women.

The books were initially published in printed form; today, they have migrated to other formats: a couple of them are pdfs and epub. Those that are more than five years old are free on open access, and newer works are sold to reach readers beyond our borders.

The magazines have divided the task of disseminating knowledge. One, a specialized academic journal, *Norteamérica*, is a bi-annual, indexed publication of academic excellence, whose articles are double-blind peer reviewed. It publishes multi- and interdisciplinary articles about North America, which it considers an object of analysis in and of itself: its processes, its history, and its dynamic, whether looking at a specific aspect of each country or linking, comparing, or situating them in their international context. This journal has been recognized not only by its peers, but also by institutions that have prominently featured it on their indices.

The other publication, *Voices of Mexico*, where this article appears, has a popular format and has evolved with the idea of breaking down overly simplistic clichés about Mexico found abroad. *Voices* is published in English and deals mainly with issues about Mexico and its relations with its regional partners, the United States and Canada. However, to fulfill its vocation of reaching a broader audience, it also uses images, photographs, illustrations, and graphics to spread knowledge more directly.


But, beyond a mere description of the CISAN's publications, I understand that researching about the North American region implies looking at ourselves, putting under a magnifying glass the matters of interest to our country about our neighbors and partners, which are strategic nations in the political, economic, and cultural make-up of the world. This allows us to understand them and ourselves, not only to get that knowledge, but to generate information that will make it possible to create public policy or rethink what is already being done. It makes it possible for our societies to know each other and discover what is different about us and what unites us, and discern our regional identity. It is essential that the work in CISAN is based on a multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary approach, since this modifies the results and opens up new fields for understanding the phenomena that our region has experienced in the short and long term so we can respond to the challenges the world poses today. **MM**

Notes

1 <http://www.cisan.unam.mx/mision.php>.


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