

# Our Voice

Co-published by the CISAN and UNAM San Antonio, this issue of *Voices of Mexico* is the culmination of a cooperative relationship that began in 2023 in the framework of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Mexico and the United States.

Faced with the idea of border walls or pauses in relations with our neighbors, as members of the university community, we have taken on the task of building bridges of mutual knowledge based on the online cycle “Readings about the United States. Two Centuries of Diplomatic Relations.” The event culminated in the launch of CISAN books at the Second Spanish-Language Book Fair, hosted by UNAM San Antonio in 2023.

We agreed to celebrate the CISAN’s thirty-fifth anniversary together with the eightieth of the UNAM San Antonio and, in collaboration with the Alamo Plan, we have brought together a diversity of voices about the cultural heritage of the city, where we have met with each other with the crisscrossed visions of academics and artists.

As a symbol of these interwoven visions, we picked the Juan O’Gorman mosaic *The Confluence of the Civilizations of the Americas*, located so close to the UNAM venue that, of course, it plays a key part in fostering the understanding between our two cultures.

Given that the history of The Alamo represents the heart of the Texas identity, this issue reviews the ambitious plan to recover this historic site and its collections, but also a related pedagogical project that allows us to understand history from multidimensional readings of it. The importance also lies in the fact that the transformation of a cultural project of this magnitude will also have an impact on improving the society and economy surrounding it.

In addition, the issue takes a critical look at how cinema has contributed to the collective memory of The Alamo and the way transnational communities give rise to identities of their own, expressed through poetry, prose, and art, which we also show some samples of in this issue.

We close with the extraordinary proposal of a Spanish-language novel writing competition organized by the UNAM San Antonio. It is an example of how the relations between our countries generate a creative space where the Mexican or Spanish-American heritage is a sign of a multiculturalism that enriches the life of San Antonio in particular, and of Texas and the United States in general.

Graciela Martínez-Zalce

Director of the Center for Research on North America

One of the aims of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) is to transcend national borders. The first of its efforts to achieve this came in July 1921, when then-Rector José Vasconcelos promoted the foundation of a few summer courses for foreigners. They included the study of the Spanish language and its literature, as well as Mexico’s history and art. In essence, Rector Vasconcelos was attempting to forge a new image for the country after the violence of the Mexican Revolution tarnished its reputation.

The idea evolved and gave rise to the Summer School, headed by well-known intellectuals involved in the formation of the new national consciousness, the development of art, and the dissemination of culture in Mexico. Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Julio Torri, Carlos Pellicer, Adolfo Best Maugard, Manuel Toussaint, and Jaime Torres Bodet were among those who fervently supported Vasconcelos's idea and later fostered other initiatives that have transcended in time, such as, for example, the creation of the School of Philosophy and Letters in August 1924.

The UNAM has also inherited other cultural projects that it has been able to manage and consolidate over the years. The university's National Library is celebrating its one-hundred-fortieth anniversary; the Mexican Bibliographical Institute, its one-hundred-twenty-fifth; the National Periodicals Library, its eightieth, all of which are hosted, administered, and coordinated by what is today the UNAM Bibliographical Research Institute. In 2024, the institute is celebrating forty-five years of occupying its current facilities in the University Cultural Center. In addition, the *Gaceta UNAM* is celebrating seventy years of disseminating university life.

As this shows, the celebration of UNAM San Antonio's existence is part of that great national project committed to education, research, and the dissemination of the knowledge our country's most prominent institution of higher learning generates. All these activities are essential for training the professionals who will contribute to meeting the country's most important challenges. This is why the establishment of the first UNAM temporary extension courses in 1944 were a fundamental milestone in the beginning of the university's internationalization.

The transformation of those temporary courses into permanent activities was an arduous process that could only continue because of the nobility of their intentions. Initially, preserving links between Mexico and our migrants through our national language and culture was its professors' main guiding light. Then, integrating the migrants into U.S. society by teaching English was such a useful service that the UNAM San Antonio became the academic point of reference in this field, recognized even by the U.S. government.

Naturally, all this has been possible due to the institutional commitment and dedication of everyone who has contributed his/her personal and professional endeavors to maintaining UNAM San Antonio's activities. From there, we have faced the challenges, we have adapted to change, and we have maintained our vocation for serving the community. We have also kept in mind the enormous responsibility of teaching the language, disseminating the culture, and, in the last analysis, educating individuals through a community dynamic that has a positive impact on San Antonio society.

During this commemoration, we have remembered the events that marked our campus's institutional life. We have reflected on the circumstances that have defined our profile and character as an academic and cultural reference point. But not only that: in this issue developed together with the CISAN, we have registered the impact of the UNAM abroad. All this is with the goal of evaluating our performance and preparing ourselves for our future challenges. On that will depend the successful future of the leadership the national university has consolidated globally over time.

Paula de Gortari Pedroza  
Director of UNAM San Antonio



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