

Venezuela Report

I attended the Primer Encuentro Nacional de Centros de Investigación en Ciencias Sociales in Caracas, June 16-17, 1994 and gave a paper on "Recursos electrónicos de las ciencias disponibles por el Internet."

The conference was an initial attempt to gain some sense of consensus on what issues should be dealt with at the national level in the near future. Although organized by the four important social science groupings in the country, Andrés Serbín of the Universidad Central and INVESP (Instituto Venezolano de Estudios Sociales y Políticos) was clearly the principal organizer. The social scientists hope to establish some sort of consortium and present themselves to funding sources, FUNDAYACUCHO in all likelihood, for a grant to subsidize electronic communications and the publication of traditional paper materials. On this second theme, several present seemed to favor not just coordination of programs but actually cutting back of the number of journals in the country, an "elite set of four," was mentioned, one of which would be social science oriented. Journal editors also worried about the lack of wide circulation for their products and about the lack of indexing for them. Needless to say, my summary to Serbín will mention both SALALM and HAPI-- it is not clear that anyone present had any knowledge of either.

On the acquisitions front, I was charged by the comrades in LANE to keep an eye out for current events and business sources. I found little changed in the newspapers front. Universal and El Nacional still dominate as national papers, with the first clearly superior to the second in depth and breadth of coverage. A new (to me, six years after its inception) financial daily, Hoy, has emerged. I never cease to be amazed at how in a region of the world where public disclosure of financial information has meaning only in the abstract, it is the business press that is the most active and, in many ways, the most analytical. Hoy, like its Mexican, Argentine, and Brazilian counterparts, offers interesting commentary on political and social events along with the economic statistics that are its bread and butter. Caracas has an English-language daily (The Daily Journal, now in vol. 49, no. 233), not a candidate for subscription, but I once had a student who wanted to go to work for an English-language newspaper in Latin America, and this did not appear in any of the sources I could find at the time I looked.

I also was impressed with two current events periodical titles, Elite and Exceso. The first, published weekly (and part of an editorial group called Capriles that also includes the newspapers El Mundo and Ultima Noticias along with several other magazines), is a direct competitor with old standbys Auténtico and Zeta but is superior to both in the stories it chooses to run (no girlie materials here, at least not yet) and in its layout and paper quality. The monthly Exceso is a general arts and happenings publication stressing feature writing and also attractively presented.

Caracas has several nice book stores, including the Kuai-Mare chain, a regular feature in many Metro stations. However, the nicest store I visited was the Monte Avila outlet in the museum and theater complex, near the Hilton Hotel (Av. Mexico is one of the relevant streets). In addition to its own works, Monte Avila has an extensive collection of

cultural magazines; some of the more promising ones published in Venezuela are Kaos (theater and performing arts), Imagen latinoamericana (general culture, stressing literature), Revista literaria Babel, and Estilo (a big, glossy painting and plastic arts production, perhaps a Caracas publication of the title originating in Bogotá). I brought home copies, if anyone wants to see them or wants bibliographic information from them.

David Block
db10@cornell.edu