

EDITOR'S NOTE

In the last decade, the Brazilian government has highlighted the importance of science communication. One concrete expression of this was the creation in 2003 of a Department for the Popularization and Communication of Science and Technology by the Ministry for Science, Technology and Innovation, which has since introduced a number of measures to support the area, including funding.

At the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), science communication has been institutionalized through the creation of a special advisory committee, the granting of technology research and development grants, and the inclusion of a field in the CV Lattes academic database with the aim of highlighting actions in this area.

At Casa de Oswaldo Cruz, the Fiocruz unit that publishes this journal, science communication is one of the core activities, expressed, for instance, in its interactive science museum, the Museum of Life (Museu da Vida), created almost 15 years ago.

Science communication and science, technology and society (STS) studies have always had a place in *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos*. However, in recognition of the strategic importance of the area, a specific section was created in 2010.

There have been so many articles submitted on science communication that we decided to put together an issue to showcase different perspectives on the relationship between science and society, particularly focusing on the mainstream media – one of the main sources of scientific information for lay audiences.

In this theme-based edition, we have gathered studies that analyze how different publications construct the social image of diverse aspects of science, technology and health, including initiatives from the first half of the twentieth century. An interesting counterpart to this historical perspective is the contemporary approach to the same topic.

This discussion includes the National Science and Technology Week, held for the 11th time in 2013, whose particular value to society lies in its capacity to mobilize people around the country.

Another topic that lends this issue a fascinating and unusual tone is the discussion of scientific controversies. Again, this covers historical controversies, such as the arrival of the plague in Brazil, as well as contemporary ones, such as human embryonic stem cell research. This latter topic particularly encourages readers to reflect on the relationship between science, the media, controversies, and lawmakers' decision-making processes.

A key and frequently overlooked element of these discussions, which is featured in the topic of this supplement, has to do with different audiences for science. Frequently, when

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the public spheres of science are mentioned, the focus is on the scientific community and the different mass media.

Countering this trend to a certain extent, Latin America has witnessed an upsurge in more systematic studies over the last ten years that seek to understand citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards science and technology. One of the articles places this discussion under the spotlight, challenging the belief that people do not accept technological advances out of ignorance, an issue that becomes critical when more controversial topics are at stake.

This edition does not exhaust the subject, but paves the way for various discussions. Indeed, this is our goal.

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