Foreword

This special issue of Informatio is remarkable for two reasons. Firstly, it showcases academic richness and geographical diversity, with contributions from Africa, South and North America, Asia, and Europe, all focused on a common problem. It is exceptional to see such a convergence of perspectives in a magazine from a young faculty at a Latin American university. Secondly, the question arises as to how this unique collection of academic material was possible, and the answer lies in the history of university work that combines teaching, research, and extension over thirty years.

Opening a new field of inquiry in an institutional environment can be challenging, particularly when incorporating themes already cultivated elsewhere. It requires audacity, tenacity, and a unique approach to contribute substantially to the common field of work. Thirty years ago, the Self-Identified Research Group "Uses and Users of Information" was established, with a central research theme that addressed a central problem of Information Science: "the use and non-use of information, the needs, demands, expectations and behaviors of people in information processes, communication flows, as well as their relationship between people and systems and services available in different contexts. Different categories of real, potential and non-user users are covered, and the ways in which individuals relate to information content are analyzed, considering the human, socio-cultural, economic, technological, epistemological, technical and ethical dimensions of this disciplinary space. It seeks to contribute to a reflective professional praxis and, articulating research and teaching, generate a space for production, accumulation and exchange, building an academic community."

Despite the weaknesses surrounding its inception, the lines of work matured, contributing substantially to the field of inquiry and dialoguing on an equal footing with contributors from various parts of the world. Reflecting from the perspective of the Sectoral Commission for Scientific Research (CSIC) of the University of the Republic, which received requests for support from members of these lines of work on multiple occasions, something is perceived that perhaps the policy did not explicitly foresee since its instruments point to particular concrete ends: the whole produces virtuous synergies. There is a lack of resources to

investigate: the Research and Development projects, the Research and Innovation projects Oriented towards Social Inclusion and the Linkage projects with the Productive Sector, the three sources of funding for CSIC research proposals, received demands that were supported, beginning as early as 1994 with work in conjunction with a trade-union. The CSIC also offered programs such as Congresses, Internships, and Visiting Professors that allowed for deeper exchanges with colleagues abroad and provided a means of dissemination for research results; the CSIC Plural Library was another of the vehicles used, with free access to the compiled books. A specific program was implemented to support undergraduate student research proposals prepared under tutorship, stimulating a taste for inquiry around user information in the younger generation.

As a retired university person who has been part of the CSIC's action for a long time, this Informatio dossier represents a milestone rather than a culmination. It serves as a demonstration that academic will and thoughtful research policies can open spaces for creativity, the advancement of knowledge, and its use for the benefit of society.