Revista REDES (REDES Journal)[83]

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Case Study Overview
Type of initiative: Open access scientific journal.

Country: Spain.

Organization behind the initiative: GRAFO, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona and LRPC, Universidad de Sevilla.

Types of organization: Universities.

Who funds the initiative?: No funding: voluntary work by researchers and electronic resources provided by the university.

History and Goals of the Initiative
REDES is an international journal that publishes research results in the field of social network analysis. It focuses especially on empirical articles in Spanish and Portuguese on the structure of relationships, with the application of techniques of analysis and visualization of networks. Since its founding in 2002 it has published 30 numbers, grouped into 27 volumes. In 2005 the peer review system started. Currently it publishes two issues a year, in June and December, and it has a multidisciplinary editorial board of researchers from Europe and America.

In 1998 the XVIII Congress of the International Network for Social Network Analysis was held in Sitges, Spain. At that meeting a small group of Ibero–American researchers launched initiatives to promote training in the techniques of network analysis among Spanish–speaking

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researchers. An e–mail distribution list, hosted on RedIRIS[84], as well as a website, were launched to exchange information, disseminate news, and share training resources.

The journal REDES was launched four years later. Since its inception the objectives of the journal have been (a) to promote academic research on network analysis in Spanish, by extension in Latin America, and (b) to become a space of scientific reference, following the consolidation of the e–mail list REDES and the website REDES as communication tools among Spanish and Latin–American researchers.

REDES is among the most relevant journals specializing in social network analysis, along with *Social Networks*, *Journal of Social Structure* and *Connections*. More recently there have been others linked to the 'network science', such as *Network Science*, covering statistical physics, simulation models and large networks databases. REDES is the only one published in Spanish. It has a wide circulation, especially Latin America. The website of the magazine has more than 1,000 visits a day, over 2,000 subscribers who receive each volume by the e–newsletter, and is supported by more than 800 subscribers of the REDES e–mail list. The countries with the most visits to the journal are Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, Chile, and the United States.

Since its inception it has been based on the principles of open knowledge and remote cooperative work. REDES publishes, disseminates and promotes network analysis. In its publications it combines quality empirical articles, translations of classics into Spanish, and the results of the early research of young researchers. REDES has been held in a community of practice that has endorsed the words of Antonio Machado[85]: "In matters of culture and knowledge, you only lose what is saved; You earn only what is given".

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[84] RedIRIS is the Spanish network which interconnects the computing resources of Universities and research centres. It is funded by the National R+D+i Plan of the Spanish Government.

[85] Antonio Machado (1875–1939) was a Spanish poet, who was born in Seville. He was part of the "Generation of 98" literary movement.
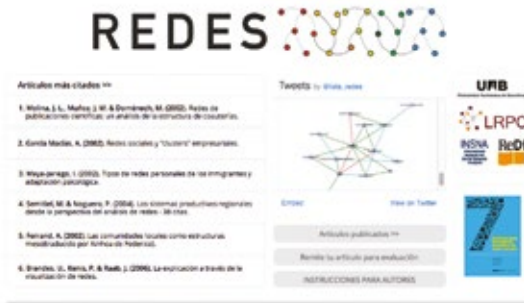
Figure 18: Screenshot of Revista Redes Homepage

Key Aspects of the Initiative

In the 2000s many academic journals began to develop an electronic version. That entailed the installation of a web site, defining access policies, adaptation of the publication format, and so on. All this represented a transition to a new management model for the journal, which affected the relationship with authors, readers and the academic community overall; and often it was combined with the continuation of the paper version. However, REDES has been an electronic journal since its inception, which has not gone through this transition process but was originally intended for digital media.

Development of Community

In fact, there was already a virtual Ibero–American community of researchers around the REDES e–mail list before the launch of the journal. The community of practice of academics and professionals interested in social network analysis exchanged information and training resources in this area. In the web REDES they were also gathering and sharing workshops and training materials, translation of technical articles, information on meetings and conferences, demonstrations of software for analysis and visualization of networks, and so on. Thus the e–mail list, with logistical support from the web REDES, functioned as a learning community that facilitated the spread of network analysis in Spanish.

The community of reference of the journal is organised into three segments, corresponding to: the REDES e–mail list (800 subscribers),

users that receive a notification with each new volume published (more than 2000 subscribers), and other readers who access the journal to locate specific content. The community has a core–periphery structure: it is organised around a very active and connected core, exchanging content on network analysis; but it is open, in successive concentric circles of activity, both to pre–doctoral researchers who are starting in the area as well as to occasional readers. This community has developed from the inside out, from the core to less active participants.

The leadership of the administrator of the REDES e–mail list was instrumental to the constitution of an effective community of practice. Especially in the early stages, the administrator provided content, answered questions raised in the list, proposed training activities, and had a central role in the exchanges that occurred in it. Maintaining a minimum level of activity – at least one message a week – gave continuity and promoted participation. Over time, the dynamics of reciprocity and the generalised exchange model built a core of active participants.

This background of open interaction, the sense of community, and collaborative learning gave support to the launch of the journal REDES. During the first years it worked as an informal system of publication of communications in congresses and meetings related to network analysis (2002–2005). In 2005 the peer review system was implemented and began to improve the quality standards of the publication. Since then the journal has improved its publishing format, has implemented the Open Journal System (OJS) for the management of manuscripts, and has been incorporated into scientific databases, improving the indicators of impact. In the period 2013–2016 it received 150 original manuscripts. The journal receives on average 21.43 original articles per semester. In the last 7 numbers, which corresponds to a range of two and a half years, the rejection rate was 31.7%.

Promotion of Analytical Techniques

The magazine is fulfilling the role of diffusing social network analysis in the Latin American academic community. The translation of high impact scientific articles expands the potential audience of recent

research and facilitates the socialisation of researchers that are introduced to the area. At the same time, REDES is a publishing medium for junior researchers. Thus it maintains its original purposes of the promotion of network analysis in Spanish. The audience of the journal has been defined by the fact that the publication is in Spanish, and complementarily in Portuguese. It also has an international editorial team, most of them from Latin America. One of the incentives to participate in REDES has been learning the techniques for relational data analysis. Software analysis and visualisation of networks are complex. The conceptual basis of the indicators of centrality and structural properties require considerable time for familiarisation and training. The web REDES has provided educational materials to learn the techniques. The e–mail list, meanwhile, has served as a guide for novice researchers, solving the doubts that arise during the research process and data analysis.

Voluntary Work

From an organisational point of view, the journal has been based on voluntary work. Although it has some connection with the *International Network for Social Network Analysis* – many of the editorial board members are part of this scientific association – it has worked independently and autonomously since its foundation. In fact, somehow the magazine has served as a bridge, connecting the community of Latin American researchers with the international community. Communication through the list REDES has facilitated the development of weak ties and alliances of academic collaboration. The list REDES came before the boom of Internet forums and was one of the pioneers in Spanish–speaking academia through RedIRIS.

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Lessons Learned and Transferability Opportunities

The REDES journal has functioned as an OER for the community of Latin American researchers interested in social network analysis. The case illustrates the combination of an email list, a web of OER, and an open access scientific journal to support a collaborative learning community. In the collective creation of knowledge, in a bottom–up process, note the following factors:

1. The journal originates in the digital environment and is based on the prior existence of a virtual community of practice of researchers.
2. The community of practice benefits from an open and active leadership, which promotes the dynamics of exchange and reciprocity among participants.
3. The initiative is based on voluntary work, as well as collaborative networks of weak ties, with a low institutional profile and a diffuse connection with the International Network for Social Network Analysis.
4. REDES is an open community, with very active members that form a core–periphery structure, which leads to the development of strong relationships and a strong sense of community.
5. Incentives for participation are organised around learning techniques of data analysis, the translation of classics of network analysis and other elements of scientific legitimacy.
6. REDES is a bridge of Latin American researchers with the international community.

In the case of the journal REDES we have illustrated that, in the electronic media, audience and impact of the contents do not depend only on the number of followers but also on the interaction dynamics and structure of relationships in the community of practice. Open access facilitates the dissemination of research. Below we summarise the above key issues.

Key aspects	Description
Originally designed for digital media	• Prevents the costs of adaptation to electronic media. • Designed for an interactive medium, with respect to users and readers
The virtual community of practice precedes the founding of the journal	• The journal was created in response to the needs of researchers. • There is a dynamic of interaction and organization of the community prior to the establishment of the journal.
Core-periphery structure of the virtual community	• There is a cohesive structure and a group of active participants who generate content appropriate for the community.
Leadership of the manager of REDES e-mail list	• Weekly generation of content. • Increase and reinforce participation in the list. • To promote exchange and generalised reciprocity.
Incorporation of the peer review system and improvement of the quality standards of the journal	• Improved publishing format, incorporation into databases. • Accreditation process of the journal.
Role of dissemination of network analysis in Spanish	• Publication of novel work, translation of classics, links with the international scientific association.
Incentive of learning the techniques of network analysis	• Training in analysis techniques. • Demonstration of network analysis and visualisation software.
Based on volunteer work	• Collaborative networks of weak ties. • Publishing with own resources.
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Table 5: Lessons learned from Revista Redes