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Two decades of science, vision and perseverance: PODIUM's legacy in Cuban physical culture and science

Dos décadas de ciencia, visión y constancia: el legado de PODIUM en la cultura física y la ciencia cubana

Duas décadas de ciência, visão e perseverança: o legado do PODIUM na cultura física e na ciência cubana.

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The undersigned, in his capacity as Director of the “LiberCiencia” Publishing Seal belonging to the University of Pinar del Río “Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca” and by institutional designation in the face of the editorial processes of the four journals of the university, assumes with a deep sense of responsibility and legitimate academic pride the writing of this editorial.

The reason it calls is the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the founding of this periodical publication, which began in 2006 thanks to the visionary drive of a group of professors from the "Nancy Uranga Romagoza " Faculty of Physical Culture. Upon reaching its twentieth year, the journal PODIUM celebrates two decades of uninterrupted publication



and has solidified its position as a leading scientific journal in the fields of physical culture, sport, adapted physical activity, recreation, and professional training in these areas. This anniversary, therefore, provides a fitting opportunity to look back with gratitude and forward with intellectual ambition.

The origins: from an idea of master's degree to an institutional reality

The genesis of PODIUM dates back to the academic proposal of then-Professor Benito Rodríguez Marrero, whose master's thesis conceived an *interface device* that was later successfully applied in the Territorial Project "Innovation Management Model in Strategic Sports." That conceptual seed germinated into a quarterly digital journal that, from its inception, aimed to publish research results not only from professionals in the sector in Pinar del Río, but also from other national and international higher education institutions, primarily in Latin America.

The journal's original structure, with its editorial board, scientific team, "Viewpoints" section, core of eight double-blind peer-reviewed articles, and the " Sports Point " and " Athletics Letters " sections, already reflects an editorial maturity rarely seen in emerging publications. This structure, though modified over time, laid the foundation for a culture of rigor, quality, and thematic openness that still distinguishes it today.

Trajectory and transformations: adapting without losing the essence

Until 2013, the journal was published quarterly. However, the editorial reality, specifically the difficulties in ensuring a constant flow of quality manuscripts, necessitated a strategic decision: to migrate to a four-monthly frequency, starting with volume 8. Since then, the journal has been published systematically in the last weeks of April, August, and December, a schedule that has been maintained to this day with increasing success.

A key milestone occurred in the 2015-2016 academic year, when the Faculty of Physical Culture was integrated into the University of Pinar del Río. This institutionalization process brought with it the technical improvement of the journal: it migrated to the open access platform Open Journal Systems (version 2.4.8) and the electronic address <http://podium.upr.edu.cu> is adopted . This change is not merely technological; it



represents a firm commitment to international visibility, interoperability, and global standards of scientific publishing.

Starting with volume 11, number 2 (2016), a new structure was established and remains in place: an editorial, a main body with original and review articles, and the emblematic "LetrAtlética" section. This simplification, far from impoverishing the journal, focuses efforts on what is essential: the dissemination of rigorous, original, and relevant results for the scientific community of Physical Culture.

Directors who have set the course

A scientific journal is, above all, a collective endeavor, but leadership leaves its mark. Over these twenty years, PODIUM has been guided by a group of professionals whose performance, at different institutional junctures, has contributed to consolidating the publication's current prestige. The following is the chronological order of leadership:

- **MSc. Benito Rodríguez Marrero** (2006-2010 and 2016-2017): founder and first director.
- **MSc. Rafael Bernal Castellanos** (2011-2014): continuity and strengthening of arbitration processes.
- **PhD. Luis Alberto Cuesta Martínez** (2015-2016 and 2025-present): accompanied the university integration and the entry into new databases.
- **PhD. Fernando Emilio Valladares Fuente** (2017-2025): period during which the journal reached high levels of indexing and international visibility.

The current editorial team: collaboration and daily commitment

However, no metric, indexing, or anniversary has any meaning without explicitly acknowledging those who, through their daily and often anonymous work, keep PODIUM running smoothly. It is both a duty and an honor to name, in this twentieth-anniversary editorial, the team that currently supports this endeavor.

To BA. Alejandro Jaime Pérez, who is responsible for the core tasks of editing, layout, and bookmarking; to the proofreader, PhD Carmen de las Nieves Ramos García, whose



meticulous attention to detail on every page reminds that form is also an essential part of content; to the translation specialist, MSc. Liliana Margarita Martínez Hernández, who builds linguistic bridges so that science can transcend borders; to the reference librarians, MSc. Nirma María Acosta Núñez and Lic. Ivon Muñoz Fernández, silent guardians of bibliographic integrity. To all of them, equally: thank you. This anniversary is also yours.

The reviewers: the silent guarantee of quality

A special mention must be made of those who are the ultimate guarantee of PODIUM's scientific quality: the reviewers or referees. Over these twenty years, hundreds of professionals, many of them anonymous to the public and authors, have accepted the selfless and demanding task of evaluating the manuscripts submitted to the editorial office. Using the double-blind peer review process that has become our hallmark, these academic peers dedicate countless hours to study, analysis, and writing their reports, with no reward other than the satisfaction of contributing to the advancement of science and the training of better professionals. To all of them, both those who are still with us and those who have been with us throughout these two decades: thank you. PODIUM is, in large part, their silent work.

The pride of indexing: PODIUM in the global science system

It is not vanity, but an objective fact, to state that PODIUM has evolved from a local project to a journal with international credentials. Each certification and indexing are the result of years of systematic work, editorial transparency, and sustained quality, with the institutional support of the University of Pinar del Río “Hermanos Saiz Montes de Oca” and the LiberCiencia Publishing House.

Listing the milestones that fill us with legitimate pride, they include:

- **Certification by CITMA (Science Technology and Environment Ministry) (10-2-2007)** : the first Cuban institutional recognition.
- **Indexing in LATINDEX Catalog (2017)**: gateway to regional quality standards.
- **Indexing in Dialnet (2017)**: visibility in the Ibero-American world.



- **Indexing in MIAR (2018):** presence in journal evaluation systems.
- **Indexing in DOAJ (20-3-2018):** a seal of quality for global open access.
- **Indexing in SciELO (March 2019):** the definitive consecration in the main network of scientific journals in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 2024, an extraordinary achievement was reached: it ranked among the **top 20 most cited Cuban journals**, according to international metrics. This indicator reflects the quality of the published work and the social and academic value of its content. This ranking is the result of cumulative work involving authors, reviewers, editors, and institutional policies that promote open science.

Metric progression: evidence of increasing impact

The evolution of the journal's indicators in Google Scholar, interpreted with the caution inherent in any alternative metric, shows an undeniable upward trend. Between 2020 and 2025, the h5-index increased from 4 to 14, while the median h5-index rose from 6 to 21. Significantly, the overall h-index grew from 3 in 2021 to 22 in 2025, and the i10-index, which counts articles with at least ten citations, experienced a remarkable increase from 43 in 2023 to 101 in 2025. These are not merely abstract figures; they represent readership, applications, scientific debates, and the permeability of ideas within the national and international academic community.

Vision for the future: towards a more open, inclusive and transformative science

Twenty years are being celebrated, and the next decade imposes challenges that must be faced with the same boldness as those professors who in 2006 dreamed of a high-impact digital magazine, from the areas related to sports, in Pinar del Río.

Starting in 2026, and as part of its editorial maturity strategy, PODIUM is transitioning from a quarterly publication schedule to **a single annual volume**. This decision, far from representing a decline in production, is the result of a rigorous evaluation of international trends in scientific communication and a careful analysis of operational metrics and capabilities.



From the **editorial** point of view, concentrating efforts on a single annual volume allows for higher selection standards, more thorough peer review processes, and offers readers a more comprehensive, homogeneous, and thematically coherent collection. From a **scientific perspective**, numerous contemporary bibliometric studies demonstrate that journals published annually or semi-annually, when they maintain a steady stream of articles **published continuously online**, achieve citation rates and visibility comparable to, or even higher than, those of journals with longer publication periods. The determining factor is not the frequency of publication of the completed issue, but rather the speed of dissemination once a manuscript is accepted and the cumulative quality of the annual corpus.

Regarding **international metrics**, the decision is based on evidence observed in journals indexed in SciELO, DOAJ, and Scopus that have undergone similar transitions. Concentrating publications into a single volume is considered to facilitate the consistent collection of metrics by aggregators such as Google Scholar, Clarivate, and Crossref; reduce citation dispersion across multiple issues; and strengthen the calculation of the impact factor when done annually. Based on this, a more robust trajectory is expected for the coming years, without affecting the immediacy of publication or the commitment to publishing articles online as soon as they are accepted.

First, it is needed to move towards **comprehensive open science**, not only with free access, but also with open data, open peer review, and transparent research protocols. The financial and technical sustainability of these models is a challenge in our context, where progress is being made gradually but steadily.

Secondly, it is necessary to diversify the journal's presence in global **databases such as** Scopus and Web of Science ; to achieve this, publications must be strengthened, strict periodicity ensured, and the rigor of peer review maintained, with a view to ensuring that science produced from Cuba and Latin America can engage on equal footing with the output of centers and institutions with the longest research tradition globally.

Thirdly, the aim is to **increase international collaboration** in authorship and editorial processes, to form a more geographically diverse external advisory board, and to establish alliances with related journals through cross-editing projects.



FINAL WORDS

In closing this editorial, on behalf of the “LiberCiencia” Publishing House and the PODIUM editorial team, it is expressed the deepest gratitude to the authors, reviewers, readers, and institutions that have made these two decades of uninterrupted publication possible. We thank the University of Pinar del Río “Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca” for its continued support, the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education for its trust, and the Cuban and international physical culture community for considering PODIUM a legitimate forum for scientific discussion.

A journey has been undertaken that began with a master's degree and has now led to its ranking among the most cited Cuban journals, but knowledge does not stagnate: it expands, is debated, and is surpassed. Therefore, this celebration is, above all, a renewed commitment to excellence, ethics, and the social relevance of science. Twenty years is nothing, as the poet sang, but for a scientific journal in Cuba, it represents a testament to resilience, creativity, and a love of knowledge.

Conflict of interest statement:

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

Author's contribution:

The author is responsible for writing the work and analyzing the documents.



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