

Our 26th anniversary

In 1991 a group of professors from the *Universidad de los Andes* in Merida, Venezuela, faced the challenge of developing in our university the computer network technology that was poised to have a major impact in many areas, especially in education, research and human development.

From the beginning we realised that the main hurdles we faced were not about hardware, software or economic limitations, but rather the lack of human resources with the knowledge necessary to implement these new technologies.

We therefore undertook the training of a select group of students at our institution who showed great enthusiasm and dedication. We soon realised the need to engage international experts if we wanted to reach our goals. The issue was how to obtain the support of international experts despite the lack of funds.

The solution was a bold initiative to convene, in a provincial university, a "Latin American Networking School", following the steps of the "First International School on Computer Networks Analysis and Management" held in 1990 at the *International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP)* in Trieste, Italy.

At the time, our only capital was a great enthusiasm and the certainty that other countries in the region also had the need to train staff in these areas. With the support from ICTP, the OAS, the authorities from our university, Fundacite-Mérida and private organizations, we organised the first Latin American Networking School in November 1992, in which a group of 14 international experts shared their knowledge with 45 participants from 10 Latin American countries during 3 weeks of classroom and field training covering the state of the art of information and communication technologies.

The success of this activity paved the way to persevere in the task of spreading the technologies that have had the greatest impact on the development of our countries. Moreover, the event promoted lively exchanges among people interested in the application of these technologies in their specific milieus.

The original format of three weeks has been shortened to one week, but with several concurrent workshops in which specific technologies are discussed in depth while retaining the theoretical and practical orientation.

2012 was the year of our twentieth anniversary. It was particularly significant that for that opportunity we had as headquarters of WALC 2012 the thriving city of Panama, as symbol of encounter for Latin American countries.

And in 2018, with twenty-six years of tradition, we continue our research, dissemination and training in Latin America and the Caribbean.