

## THE CHARMS AND PAINS OF MULTIDISCIPLINARITY

The giants of periodical scientific publication have traditionally been journals of multidisciplinary nature, open with very few exceptions, to all the areas of scientific endeavor. When the Interciencia Association established in 1976 the *Interciencia* journal, it did so under the powerful influence of those who edited and published *Science* for more than two decades. Thus, the desire was fulfilled that, in the same manner as the latter served the scientific and technologic communities of the United States, the new publication would be an organ for knowledge dissemination, consolidation and interaction of the scientific and technological communities of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Since its beginnings, *Interciencia* was a multidisciplinary journal and, as such it was incorporated in 1978 to the *Science Citation Index* of the *Institute for Scientific Information*. More than three decades later the journal was reclassified in the field of Ecology, although nothing had changed inasmuch as the areas of knowledge included in the publication. The change was due to the larger number of citations of published papers in articles that appeared in journals specializing in that field. Notwithstanding, although the areas of environment, ecology and agriculture have been the predominating ones in *Interciencia*, the journal has continued to be a multidisciplinary publication. This fact determines a wide spectrum of editorial and refereeing activities.

Also since its beginnings *Interciencia* has been a trilingual journal. Papers are published in Spanish, English and Portuguese, and include in all cases summaries of the material in the three languages.

The nature of the papers that are submitted for consideration to *Interciencia* corresponds to a varied spectrum of scientific fields, being Spanish and Portuguese the predominant languages of the received and published manuscripts, while those written in English are relatively rare. These two factors determine that, on the one hand, there is not an audience that is only oriented by their interest in one or more specific areas;

on the other hand, they determine that the participation in the world of citations within the so-called mainstream of science and, therefore, its impact factor, be extremely low and without comparison to the publications in specific areas and English language.

The most obvious manner to counter the situation would be a combination of narrowing the scope of the journal and favoring the use of English. The first measure would imply a change in orientation in which pertinence to the development of the countries of the region and the wellbeing of their people, as it has been the case up to this date, would not necessarily predominate. Only publication of work done in areas that had been adopted as being of particular interest would be considered; the relevance of the work in those fields determined as central would become predominant. The second measure, while it would also help achieve a progress in impact factor, would constitute a tacit acceptance that our cultures utilize languages that are of an inferior category. It would be to deny the very real need of a communication mechanism for the findings obtained by many of the researchers in the region, mostly among those starting their professional careers, who have not had the opportunity to consolidate their knowledge of foreign languages.

*Interciencia* has represented an opportunity for the dissemination of the findings of our researchers, whatever their area of specialization or their sphere of implementation, provided that they were of interest to the scientific community in general and that they dealt with studies having a clear pertinence for the development of our countries and the wellbeing of their peoples, at the same time that their quality would have been certified by the careful analysis performed by the peer specialists to whom the refereeing of each one of the papers to be published has been assigned.

MIGUEL LAUFER  
Director