

VALIDITY OF A REGIONAL JOURNAL

In 1974, the Associations for the Advancement of Science of Brazil, USA and Venezuela, together with the *Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología* of Mexico, established the Interciencia Association, with the aim of fostering the union among the scientific communities of the Americas in their role as motors for the development of member countries and the progress and wellbeing of their people. At the time it was also decided to start a journal that would serve as a vehicle to that union, while promoting the exchange of information and the communication between the member associations.

Three and a half decades after Marcel Roche founded the *Interciencia* journal, it seems appropriate to question whether the original motivations are still valid, if it occupies the space it should, and if the unavoidable changes that it has experimented have been deviated or have reinforced its role.

The regional profile has changed very little. While there is today a clear predominance of democratic regimes, the military boot has never stopped being present, sometimes visibly at the front of governments, sometimes at the background of governance. In the universities, which are the natural research centers, autonomy of thought, teaching and research predominates, although in one or another country such autonomy is harassed and violated by radical regimes and by authorities that are pestered by it. The scientific communities have grown, but the production of knowledge, with the exception of Brazil, has kept, in general, very similar numbers.

Hemispheric cooperation in matters of science and technology is at deplorable levels. At the time when *Interciencia* appeared there was a large cooperation program developed by the Organization of American States, which weakened in the 80's and its place was occupied by the CyTED program, sponsored by Spain. A similar weakening was suffered by the Pan American Health Organization program and the influence of the Inter American Development Bank. The activities of UNESCO, which played an important role in the

structuring of science and technology systems in our countries, also weakened. The programs of the European Union emphasize cooperation with its member countries rather than between countries in this continent. None of the several regional integration initiatives has been able to develop a significant program of scientific cooperation.

Perhaps the most noticeable characteristics of our science are the large brain drain that we suffer, the eagerness to publish in first world journals, and the spite of local publications. The local language is set aside.

The number of scientific publications, particularly those of specialized journals, has increased in Brazil, but not so in the rest of the countries. Of the publications, those that hold the banner of multi-nationality, as does *Interciencia*, are notoriously absent. More so are those of multidisciplinary character.

It is appropriate to ask whether the maintenance of a trilingual multidisciplinary journal in our region is a matter of dreamers. *Interciencia* is no more what it used to be, a journal that, besides serving as a means for publication of scientific papers in Spanish, English and Portuguese, published regional news, and articles about notables and relevant institutions. Nowadays it is one more journal of science and technology, devoted to the dissemination of research results, with few exceptions consisting of opinion papers, essays and thematic reviews. This was the result of the lack of funds that would allow to cover the more journalistic aspect of the interaction between member societies, and of the great demand from the scientific community for an appropriate, indexed and internationally respected medium where to publish.

Surprisingly, that demand is not restricted to the region. There are more papers being submitted to *Interciencia* from Africa and from the Middle and Far East than from English speaking Caribbean countries or from most Latin American countries. However, *Interciencia* will maintain its regional spirit, at the service of the scientific communities of the Americas.

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