
REQUIEM FOR A CELESTIAL ACTIVITY

It would seem to be impossible to find nowadays an editor or someone responsible for programs of scientific and technological literature dissemination, not to mention a researcher, who would not consider as fundamental the presence of the publications in the electronic media. Whether or not an advocate of the idea of open and free access for all the material included in scientific journals, everybody tries to make accessible to the largest audience possible and as fast as feasible the knowledge generated day to day in the laboratories.

Already about a decade ago, the authorities of the then called National Council of Scientific and Technological Research decided to adopt the *Scientific Electronic Library Online*, better known by the celestial initials SciELO (in Portuguese and Spanish *cielo* means 'sky' or 'heavens'), as the official and exclusive medium for the electronic diffusion of the contents of journals produced in the country that would obtain the required qualification to be incorporated into the collection. The decision included, or so it was understood by some of us, the commitment to financially support the production of duly qualified periodicals, also comprising the preparation of materials to be incorporated into SciELO.Ve.

Many of us considered it as a sound decision. SciELO had initiated its activities in 1977 in Brazil as an initiative of BIREME, an institution that under the leadership of Abel Packer had, from the very beginning, the intention to adhere to the program the largest possible number of countries in Ibero America. SciELO pursued the triple objective of achieving the largest dissemination of its periodical publications in the modality of open access to full materials, of helping to improve the level of our journals, and of develop-

ing search systems, measurements and bibliometric indexes for a considerable number of journals, most of which were outside the so-called mainstream of science.

During its brief existence SciELO has grown in a fast and admirable fashion, already including a significant number of countries and an ever growing number of journals, to which rules with rigorous demands are applied in order to be incorporated and to be maintained in the collection. Its bibliometric handling permits, at least in some countries, to have fast access to important data and evaluations.

In Venezuela, the program of subsidies for national scientific and technological publications had its last year of activity in 2009. However, financial assistance for the preparation of the electronic versions to be incorporated into SciELO-Venezuela had ceased in 2008, at least for some journals, among which is *Interciencia*. The efforts of those who worked in order to establish the program as a part of a robust regional program are currently jeopardized.

Fortunately, other alternatives for the electronic dissemination of open access journals are represented, in our case, by the web page www.interciencia.org, as well as our presence in Redalyc, Web of Science, DOAJ, Dialnet and Latindex, to mention some initiatives of regional and international reach.

In times when accessibility to publications in science and technology through electronic media has become a necessity, the cessation of support for previously selected mechanisms already under way is not understandable. Even larger is the damage inflicted to the science and technology community when substitute options are not adopted in order to give continuity to the already accomplished efforts.

MIGUEL LAUFER
Editor