

## WHO PAYS FOR SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS?

The production and distribution costs of scientific journals are not limited to their printing and mailing or, in the present era of electronics and internet, to setting the texts in a server. A large number of activities carried out by qualified personnel are required, although they are not visible, to turn into reality the possibility of disseminating the results and ideas of those who are devoted to scientific labor.

In smaller countries, dozens and even hundreds of men and women dedicate their lives to research and teaching, while in larger countries they are counted by the thousands and tens of thousands. But not only do scientists want to publish, motivated by their natural desire to make their advances known, but also by the possibility to obtain funding for their work or, why not, by the possibility of improving their professional status and their personal income. Also the institutions where they work require the periodic publication of papers so as to increase their prestige and procure better budgets.

In addition to this, the statement that research does not conclude until it has been published is rather appropriate. Public dissemination, be it at a more or a less specialized level according to each case, is what allows that the results obtained and the ideas expressed be validated and discussed by peers and others, giving true significance to the advancement of knowledge proposed and to what is achieved. The existence of suitable media for such dissemination, the scientific journals, is therefore a need felt by all of those who dedicate themselves to science, be it in the laboratories or at the departmental, institutional or governmental bureaucracies.

Worldwide, the large majority of scientific journals, which amount to several tens of thousands, are established in institutions or in professional societies that provide the needed funding to cover costs of maintenance, personnel, production and mailing. There are very few, if any, that have enough prestige and demand so as to charge for sub-

scriptions the very high prices needed to cover their costs. Some survive thanks to the support of foundations or enterprises, or income from publicity, which requires a large circulation. Some levy a page charge to authors. Also, in some countries grants are provided by governmental programs for the promotion of scientific publications.

*Interciencia* takes pride in not having required any payment from authors for the submission nor the publication of papers during the past 36 years. In its beginnings, the journal had the support of governmental agencies from Mexico and Venezuela, and later only from the latter. For more than a decade, funds granted by official institutions, and other sporadic contributions from member institutions of the Interciencia Association, have become insufficient. For this reason, a policy was initiated for soliciting institutional contributions, negotiated by authors themselves, from whom, nevertheless, no payment whatsoever is required. Unfortunately, in the last two years the aforementioned grants and the corresponding program have disappeared. The journal has hardly been able to survive thanks to the institutional contributions received, which are requested after a paper has been already accepted for publication.

Such contributions have a rationale. If authors are interested in publishing and this benefits them, then they have the moral obligation to request that their respective institutions or research grants provide contributions for the maintenance of the journal. In turn, the institutions that require their members to publish and that also benefit from it should assume the responsibility to contribute to the survival of the journals.

Although there are regrettable cases in which neither authors nor institutions respond positively to the requests for support, those that do so have made possible the survival of *Interciencia* until this day, which is deeply acknowledged.

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