

QUALITY AND IMPACT OF IBERO-AMERICAN JOURNALS: AN ONGOING PERSPECTIVE

Last October, the congress-workshop *Quality and Impact of Ibero-American Journals*, organized by Latindex and the University of Costa Rica, was held in San José, Costa Rica. This meeting allowed carrying out a critical analysis of the progress in this field since the workshops held in Guadalajara en 1994 and 1997.

There was a strong convergence of viewpoints concerning some central topics, both among plenary lecturers and in the debates. In particular, strong questioning was made of the current paradigm of quality of a scientific journal centered in the use of a simple numerical indicator such as the impact factor. It was made clear that its use to evaluate articles, or even their authors, is clearly incorrect and, however, it is extensively practiced in our countries, with a strong influence on academic evaluation policies. As any other individual measurement, the impact factor does not sense the diversity of journals, their goals and values, the specificity of different fields of knowledge and the nature of their target audience. This was considered of particular relevance for journals outside the mainstream of science, as is the case of the majority of Ibero-American titles.

The importance of information services created in the region in recent years was recognized. There is now a large and far reaching catalogue containing the enormous amount of 18000 titles (too many, it was commented) out of which some 3500 are accessible in Internet. Numerous on-line archives have also appeared, giving access to a selection of these titles, with added services such as article citation counting. The congress participants showed special appreciation for the promotion of good editorial practices by these information services, and it was highlighted that the editorial quality criteria established by Latindex have been adopted as a base by the main on-line archives and by institutions that evaluate journals with diverse purposes. The adoption of the quality parameters for the whole region and the continuation of the promotion of editorial guidelines were recommended.

A good practice that is increasingly used is that of open access for the diffusion of electronic journals, particularly through the OJS, although the technological resources available are still far from being properly employed and the use of

metadata is still scant. The adoption of open access platforms by the main on-line archives facilitates the work of editors at the same time that it provides a valuable service to authors and readers. It is foreseen that the Latindex project *Portal de Portales*, which will offer a unique entry way to these on-line collections, will increase the value of these services.

There was the opportunity to make a critical revision of the principal problems and shortages that still plague our journals. Many face difficulties to receive original and quality material, they do not count with an adequate refereeing system and editorial body, are of a limited circulation and barely visible, are subjected to institutional ups and downs and financial problems, and often are dependent upon individual efforts of their editors. They have not been able to break the commonly commented vicious circle. It was considered as important that each country adopt institutional policies for the promotion of journals, searching to improve their quality and to recognize it through incentives. It was suggested to make efforts, in every area, to identify titles that could fuse to achieve a better product, and it was insisted that every new title (they appear almost daily) should have, from the start, a clear idea of its goals and how to reach them. There are important areas in the natural sciences, and in the social sciences and the humanities, where Ibero-American scientists have something specific to say. Nothing is better than creating quality instruments to make this contribution known and to disseminate it.

Fortune made coincide the Costa Rican congress with the third international seminar *Pensar en español* ("Think in Spanish"), in Mexico, where a group of distinguished scholars underlined the need to promote the presence and worldwide influence of thought in the Spanish language, and to increase the quality and diffusion of the scientific creations in different fields. We are pleased with this declaration, which once turned into practice will contribute to make of our publications instruments for the promotion of the best of our science.

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