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## PEER REVIEW

The opening article in the current issue portrays a transcendental and polemic aspect of one of the pillars of scientific publication. When the first scientific journal was established, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, accepting a work for publication was dependent upon the criterion of a member of the Royal Academy, who served in the role of reviewer upon being requested by the editor. The function of the reviewer evolved very slowly until it became the pillar we know nowadays, and it was only in the last century, at the time when science became international, that peer review acquired the importance it has today in the editorial world. Already in the second half of the century the practice of refereeing of the publications was widespread and, it transformed into the peer review as we know it today. There is no doubt that the quality of a periodic publication has a lot to do with the quality of its reviewer peers, but it is also related to the speed with which the review is carried out.

The paper we refer to above examines in detail the duration of the review process by peers for the case of works accepted for publication by the Latin American scientific journals. The authors show that in the first decade of this century a very marked increase took place in the statement by journals of the time elapsed between reception and publication but, despite the technological progress that took place at the time and the adoption of electronic means for the editorial management of the publications, the expected (and we would dare to wrongly say predictable) reduction in the processing time of the material did not take place. On the contrary, the time between reception and publication of scientific papers remains unaltered or increases, depending on the disciplines and varying among countries.

The dissection by disciplines, differentiating the exact and natural sciences from the social sciences, arts and humanities allow the reader to appreciate what has happened in the cases of these latter fields as the traditional modality of monographic publications has given way to the publication of articles in periodic journals.

The study exemplifies the importance of the existence of appropriate sources from which to efficiently extract

relevant information. Such is the case with the data base from Redalyc, the Network of Scientific Journals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal, an initiative of the *Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México*, from which it has been possible to obtain pertinent information of close to six hundred journals and well over a hundred thousand articles. This reinforces the observation made in our previous editorial, about the scarcity and untrustworthiness of official statistics and the importance of the existence of a private data base thanks to which it was possible to evaluate aspects of importance for the objectives of the study being written about.

It should be said that one of the most interesting aspects, hardly commented in the literature, of peer review is the improvement of the material to be published. Many are the suggestions that the authors of the papers receive from the reviewers, both relative to the form and to the essence of the texts submitted and that redounds in a clearer and more precise presentation of the obtained results and their significance. This is something of great value in the case of dissertations and papers of young researchers who enter the world of publication, and also contributes abundantly in many cases of mature researchers,

The time consumed in the peer review of the papers submitted for publication requires being reduced if we aim towards scientific journals that fulfill a more dynamic and significant role in certifying and making visible the new knowledge produced by scientists. As it maintains a maximum of transparency and avoids the bias against peripheral countries, it is necessary that the editorial community becomes conscious of the need to make more efficient the processing of the received papers.

MIGUEL LAUFER  
Editor