

THE OFFICIAL ASSESSMENT OF SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

On several occasions, the authors of the publications that appear on our pages have addressed the journal to clarify the differentiation existing between articles, communications and essays. In some cases, they have brought up that the recognition given by the official entities of their country does not involve in the same manner the three categories or sections. The answer given by *Interciencia* has always been the same:

Since its establishment, in 1976, carried out jointly by the Associations for the Advancement of Science from Brazil (SBPC), United States (AAAS) and Venezuela (ASOVAC), and the following year also by CONICET of Mexico, *Interciencia* had as its main goal to become a diffusion medium for science and technology among the scientific communities of Latin America and the Caribbean. It followed the model of *Science*, the journal published by AAAS, and contained equivalent sections, in the above-mentioned three categories, where all the received manuscripts were submitted to a rigorous peer review. Around the mid 80's its founding director, Marcel Roche, was concerned about emphasizing what he considered as the fundamental category for the journal, that of communications or research reports, convinced as he was that it was the one that better revealed the work of researchers.

Forty-six years after its beginnings, *Interciencia* maintains the three sections. The norm of publishing only those papers that have been recommended by a majority of the consulted specialists in their role as referees has been rigorously followed ever since. Perhaps, this might be the reason that the journal has remained included, without interruption, in the indexes kept by the *Institute of Scientific Information* (ISI), today known as *Web of Science* (WOS).

It is noteworthy that, in consequence, this indexing system, as well as all others in which the journal has been included, have always accounted equally for the contents of the three sections. Whatever the section where a published paper is placed, it always has had an identical academic and

bibliometric value: all the material published in *Interciencia*, independently of the way it has been categorized, presents the results of original scientific research, with identical parameters of peer review and referential validity.

The Editorial Committee of the journal classifies the contents of the material so as to place it in one of the three sections following, *grosso modo*, these criteria: articles are original pieces of some extension where a given subject is analyzed in depth, or a review or synthesis of a topic or field is carried out; reports are writings of variable length where the results of a specific original research are informed; finally, essays are texts in which original ideas about a given topic are elaborated.

It is obvious that the limits between the three categories are at times ill-defined and, no doubt, the committee is fallible; notwithstanding, the three sections contain material of identical bibliographical value. Therefore, the observation that official entities assess differently such materials lack of any rational support. Actually, we have not been able to find rules that, in any of our countries, establish differences between them. What changes is the denomination given to them. Some agencies recognize and validate the publication of "articles", without any other appellative, signifying what is simply termed in English as "papers", without any further mention of the extension or classification of the respective published scientific work.

In the world of scientific research it is understood that the papers duly refereed and published in recognized journals have equal validity. The contents of such publications and their acceptance or rejection by the scientific community is what, afterwards, will establish differences amongst them.

MIGUEL LAUFER
Editor, *Interciencia*