

THE CRISIS OF INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS IN LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America, science has grown steadily in the number of researchers, projects, and publications. Yet this progress coexists with a less visible reality: the fragility of independent scientific journals that, for decades, have sustained the circulation of knowledge relevant to the region. These publications —among them *Interciencia*— have been spaces for interdisciplinary exchange, editorial training, and open dissemination. Today they face a crisis that threatens their continuity and demands a collective response.

The problem is structural. Maintaining a journal with peer review, ethical standards, professional editing, digital preservation, and international dissemination requires stable resources that, in most of our countries, are scarce or nonexistent. Independent journals do not belong to major commercial publishers nor do they receive continuous state subsidies; they survive thanks to modest publication fees, occasional institutional support, and the enormous voluntary work of editors, reviewers, and technical collaborators. This model, which sustained scientific communication for decades, has become unsustainable in the face of rising costs and the pressure of a highly concentrated global publishing market.

Adding to this precariousness is an alarming phenomenon: the proliferation of predatory or fraudulent journals that imitate the names and formats of legitimate publications to deceive authors, charge abusive fees, and promise false indexation. Such practices confuse young researchers, erode trust in scientific communication, and damage the reputation of serious journals. *Interciencia* has repeatedly had to warn about websites impersonating its editorial identity.

Global dynamics also pressure researchers to favor international journals with high impact indicators, often disconnected from Latin American problems and contexts. Academic evaluation systems —frequently centered on imported metrics and global rankings— reinforce this tendency and weaken regional publications that provide essential spaces for applied research, social innovation, and critical reflection on our own challenges.

Not everything is adverse. Digital transformation and regional cooperation offer tools to strengthen the visibility and credibility of independent journals. Responsible open access, the adoption of persistent identifiers such as DOI and ORCID —an effort in which *Interciencia* actively works to enhance the traceability and integrity of its content—, digital preservation systems, and cooperative networks such as SciELO, Redalyc, and Latindex have shown that it is

possible to expand reach without abandoning Latin American identity. However, for these initiatives to be sustainable, more than editorial resilience is required: it is essential to have the active commitment of universities, research institutes, and national science and technology systems.

Public agencies must recognize that scientific publishing is a strategic service and finance it as a public good, in the same way that laboratories, libraries, or data networks are supported. Universities should actively back the journals in which their academics publish —not only through financial contributions, but also by providing infrastructure, technical services, professional training for editors, and institutional recognition of editorial work. Likewise, scientific evaluation systems must overcome the bias that equates quality with global metrics and instead value knowledge relevant to local and regional development.

Researchers also have a key role. Before submitting their manuscripts, they should verify the legitimacy of journals, support those that maintain rigorous editorial processes, and avoid feeding the predatory publishing business. Publishing in an independent regional journal is not an act of lesser prestige; it is a conscious commitment to scientific autonomy and editorial diversity —values that Latin America needs to build its own future.

The crisis of independent scientific journals is not merely an economic problem; it reflects a system that has yet to fully embrace intellectual sovereignty and regional solidarity as guiding principles. If Latin America aspires to produce knowledge relevant to its development and to engage with the world on dignified terms, it must protect the communication channels it has built through decades of effort.

From *Interciencia*, we reaffirm our commitment to an open, rigorous, and contextually grounded science. At the same time, we call upon scientific communities, institutions, policymakers, and funding agencies: supporting independent journals is not a nostalgic or romantic gesture, but a strategic investment. On their strength depends whether Latin American science can preserve its own voice —plural, critical, and capable of offering solutions to the great social, environmental, and technological challenges of our time.

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