THE JOURNAL THAT EXISTS BEYOND ITS PAGES

A scientific journal seems to be defined by what it publishes. In the case of *Interciencia*, Articles, Communications, and Essays fill its pages; we count them, cite them, track their impact and presence in databases, and use them to assess part of the journal's trajectory. Yet much of what makes a journal's existence possible appears in none of those records.

More than two decades ago, an editorial in this journal referred to reviewers as its "hidden heroes," acknowledging those who contribute their knowledge, time, and rigor to manuscript evaluation without having their names appear alongside the published papers. That reflection pointed out that a journal's continuity depends on numerous factors and on many people who remain invisible to its readers. Reviewers were—and continue to be—an essential part of that invisible world. But they are not alone.

Between the manuscript an author submits and the paper that eventually reaches a reader lies a largely unseen world. It encompasses the initial assessment and editorial decisions; the often difficult search for specialists willing to review manuscripts; their comments; the authors' responses; revised versions; and, sometimes, additional rounds of review. Some of these stories end in publication. Others do not. Yet both require time, knowledge, and effort that no published page will ever record.

Even a rejected manuscript may gain something valuable from a journal. An insightful comment, a methodological weakness identified in time, or a rigorous review may improve research that will eventually be published elsewhere. That contribution will never be attributed to the journal that participated in the process. No citation will account for it, nor will any indicator recognize it. It will disappear from the journal's visible history.

When a paper is accepted, another form of invisibility begins. Texts must be reviewed, corrected, standardized, and checked; references verified; tables and figures prepared; texts refined in the journal's languages; pages laid out; and everything reviewed once again. Editorial work does not end with acceptance, but only when every page has taken the form in which it will reach the reader.

Yet there is an even more fundamental reality that rarely enters discussions of scientific quality: a journal must also survive. Editorial rigor does not, by itself, cover publication costs, nor does manuscript quality guarantee the resources needed to produce a journal. Without subsidies, someone must secure the means to ensure that the next issue can become a reality. Raising funds and managing available resources do not produce scientific knowledge or earn a byline on a published paper, but they make it possible for that knowledge to find a place where it can be published.

Nor does the process end there. Page layout transforms texts, tables, and figures into the pages readers will recognize. Each new issue must then be incorporated into the journal's digital platform and made available to the public. What appears to happen effortlessly—a well-organized page, a paper accessible with a single click—conceals work that becomes less visible the better it is done.

Interciencia also benefits from a form of collaboration that is part of its identity and is not common to all scientific journals. For years, works by artists from Latin America and the Caribbean have accompanied our issues, thanks to artists and galleries who generously authorize their reproduction. These works are not merely ornamental: alongside the dissemination of science and technology, they keep a window open onto another expression of our region's creativity.

Behind every issue lie editorial work, administration, page layout, and digital platform management, together with the contributions of authors, reviewers, and, in our case, artists and galleries. All are part of a collective endeavor far more complex than the sum of the papers published. Some names are recorded; others are not. Some contributions can be measured; others disappear once their purpose has been fulfilled.

We live in an era inclined to measure scientific activity. We count publications, citations, downloads, indexes, and indicators. These are necessary points of reference, but there is a risk of confusing what we can count with everything that holds value. How many hours lie behind a single issue? How many decisions, messages, corrections, searches, reviews, and administrative tasks will readers never know about? How many people did something essential to bring a page into existence, yet will never appear on it? We have no indicator for that. Perhaps we do not need one.

A journal has a visible history, preserved in its volumes and pages, which can be consulted, cited, and measured. There is another history, made of time, knowledge, decisions, persistence, and collaboration, that is not recorded in the same way.

One history is found in its pages. The other made those pages possible.

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