

PRESENTATION

A little over two decades have passed since it first came to be the idea of having an information system about Ibero American scholarly journals that would respond to relevant questions hovering in the air, such as: How many scholarly and scientific journals exist in Latin America, edited by whom, in what situation are they? What is the editorial quality of said journals and what can be done to improve it? How to raise their visibility?

It was clear that the answers to those questions were only possible through collective effort, distributed among countries of the region, to develop a broad and including information system. The network of centers of collection was created with that purpose, conceived first at a regional level and finally concretized nationwide. To the first plan to exclusively cover Latin America, the inclusion of Spain and Portugal followed almost immediately to reach the Ibero American character that distinguishes the Latindex System. Twenty years after the network was created, 24 countries are now a part of it.

Where is Latindex now? It is a solid cooperation network involving renowned institutions in the field of information and Science in the different countries. The system has played a pioneering role, contributing as a focal point to transform de terrain of Scientific and Scholarly journals in Ibero America. From its inception, other existing information systems in the region and the world have relied on Latindex products, guidelines and assistance.

Its coverage and impact have exceeded the Ibero American region, when partners joined from Europe and Asia to also make visible the journals with Latin Americanist, Hispanic and Lusophone content.

The partner institutions, one for each country, voluntarily provide the human and material resources required to maintain the system. The number of collaborators doesn't represent generally a heavy burden for institutions, and the computing platform, developed at the General Department of

Computing and Information and Communications Technologies (DGTIC) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), operates under open software.

Latindex is today a mandatory reference when it comes to learning about Ibero American Scientific and Scholarly journals. Its critical mass of information already places it as the information system with the largest number of Ibero American Scholarly periodicals, and its records of print and electronic journals surpass any other system in terms of quality and quantity of information. The Directory holds over 24,000 records, of which a little over 7,000 correspond to online journals with access to full texts. The Catalog holds more than 8,000 journal titles selected by their proven editorial quality, with which is possible now to provide a broader and more accurate spectrum of the processes journals use in order to offer a quality product to their readership.

Due to the very nature of our publications, for their tradition to offer results of academic work and research freely and free, and because Latindex was born as a not-for-profit product, the System is an active promoter of open access. One of its products, the Portal of Portals (at www.latindex.ppl.unam.mx), offers free and organized search services to more than 1.5 million articles collected by the online journals collections, and fosters the quality and interoperability among them.

The system plays an educational and didactic role among Ibero American publishers and editors, especially through the publication and implementation of its editorial quality criteria for print and online journals, which are applied as a reference and a starting point for journal editing and evaluation. Multiple information systems, both national and regional, use Latindex's editorial quality characteristics as an example of standards and best practices, and recognize it as such.

Where's Latindex headed? The wealth of collected information is already very large and much of it refers to print publications, a distribution medium that

has ceased to be at the forefront in the flow of global scientific communication. Most of the developments, policies and actions now address online publication and in Ibero America, in particular, as open access. That is the reason for the development of the system to prioritize registration, quality and reliability of the data related to open online journals, implying that the focus of the registration in the Directory and the qualification in the Catalog will have to be recreated and improved. It is imperative to ensure that the system continues to provide information of utmost interest and value to editors, information professionals, authors and scientific policy decision makers. At the same time, attention must be paid to the evolution of the journal as a vehicle for scientific publishing and communication, in order to ensure the validity of Latindex as an information service. In this scenario, cooperation and cooperative work are without doubt still its fundamental pillars.

This special issue of Ciência da Informação comprises eleven contributions that reflect the current state of Latindex's work, contributions and impact it has had in each country. It begins with José Octavio Alonso Gamboa and Ana María Cetto summarizing the activities of the system. They emphasize the Directory's objective as an including information resource with a broad and historical view that distinguishes it from other regional initiatives that tend to concentrate on more reduced sets. As for the Catalog, its contribution is valued as a regional response to those requesting to know about the quality of publications from a complementary perspective to the view of quality imposed by the Anglo-Saxon world, and its usefulness is remarked for allowing editors to qualify their own publications while inviting them to new learning. Also highlighted is its contribution to make know technical and diffusion journals that comprise over half of the universe of Scholarly journals in Ibero America. In conclusion, the authors mention the efforts towards a regional open access strategy, being Latindex's Portal of Portals a resource that contributes to this movement.

Next, we have the contribution from Ana María Flores and Ana Casado from Latindex-Argentina, in which emphasis is on the importance of institutional policies that support and promote journals in their country, resulting in a key factor to Latindex's operations. It particularly recognizes the role played by the Catalog as a mandatory reference to know about the quality of the publications. It also mentions the advantage of the Latindex collection center being hosted by CAICYT, also the headquarters of the ISSN National Center. Data shows that this is one of the countries where there is a predominance of Scholarly journals specialized in Social Sciences, much like the tradition of democratic access to information has played.

In the article on Brazil, Bianca Amaro, Danyelle Silva and Teila Carvalho stress the importance of cooperative networks of information and place Latindex among the most recognized efforts by Brazilian scientific editors, and certainly the most inclusive. They highlight the large contribution of Brazil to the Directory and the Catalog, as well as the accelerated growth of scientific information based on the use of technologies, thus making the presence of Brazilian online journals and as open access very relevant. Accompanying this quantitative data are the efforts of Ibict, the Latindex representative institution in Brazil, in the promotion of the Open Journal Systems (OJS), translated to Portuguese as SEER, that led to the creation of more than a thousand Brazilian scientific online journals. The authors make important note of the value that the information provided by the system is open and available for free access, while other similar systems available around the world are accessible only through subscription. In conclusion, they also highlight the contribution and usefulness of the methodology that originated the Catalog, as a diagnostics tool for editors.

As for the work of Elizabeth Páez of the National Scientific and Technological Research Committee (CONICYT) of Chile, where the national collection center is located, it points out the importance of the institutional context in which Latindex is developed

in that country, and mentions the use of the editorial quality characteristics of the Catalog as a reference in the scientific information projects related to Chile's journal evaluation. It suggests that Latindex respond to the new tendencies focused at the article level, with the ability to become a complete service, able to detect and generate products according to the new trends in scientific publishing, while pointing out the challenges of the system to bring together countries with such dissimilar scientific production.

Saray Córdoba González's article points out the efforts in training and assistance to the publishing sector in Costa Rica and the by-products in which Latindex has been able to have an effect on, as part of a university strategy, where decisions have led to direct improvement in the preparation of Scholarly journals of the country. It also deals with how the insertion of Latindex has contributed to the improvement and promotion of open access to information. It points out the state of transition in which the journals are, in face of the notable increase in titles available online, even when a few editors maintain their print versions to satisfy readers' habits. Nonetheless, it notes the important role the Catalog has played in the absence of a national journal evaluation system and the fact that public and private universities have considered in their accreditations the presence of journals in the Catalog, it being the sole system at a national level that guarantees journal quality.

Meanwhile, the contribution of Teresa Abejón and Luis Rodríguez Yunta, of the CSIC- Spain, points out the good response from editors and users when considering Latindex as a reference point in Spain, as well as the notable progress in meeting the Catalog's criteria. It emphasizes also the predominance of Social Sciences' journals and identify a threefold impact of Latindex: a) On the quality and visibility of publications; b) On the use of Latindex criteria in selection work applied to journals (by libraries, research centers and other information services such as Dialnet) and c) On the diversity of systems for scientific evaluation, especially in Social Sciences, which use Latindex criteria, even though not always explicitly mentioned.

The contribution also points out that some Latindex criteria need more precision and should focus more on the quality of the content, suggesting that, in the future, Latindex may take into account the developments of some evaluation systems and incorporates them into its batch of characteristics.

In the article by José Octavio Alonso Gamboa, Felipe Rafael Reyna Espinosa and Liliana Andrea Sánchez Islas, of Latindex-México, the historical value that the Directory represents is highlighted, by disseminating up-to-date and complete information on the largest number of Mexican Scholarly journals. There is also the coincidence of predominance of Social Sciences journals, as well as the improvement in journal quality since the appearance of the Catalog's criteria, a situation recognized also by journal editors. The authors also point out the high percentage of ceased journals, which requires better attention from the institutions involved in the publishing journals. They note, however, the usefulness of the meetings and workshops for editors, as well as the active participation in promoting a law in favor of open access in Mexico. From this interaction, authors warn of a few challenges still faced by Mexican journals: sustainability, editorial sector professionalization, low visibility, poor knowledge of open access and its requirements, as well as their low international impact.

The work of Ruth Velia Gómez, of the National Agrarian University of Nicaragua, is centered on the Latindex's impact on the Scholarly journal sector in a country that has managed, through the work with Latindex, to build a national journals database. It highlights the institutional commitment to this goal by relying on the strong support from the Universities National Council. It discusses the current grounds on which are developed Nicaraguan Scholarly journals and, in particular, the adoption of editorial quality criteria. Special focus is placed on the emergence of online publications, as well as on the training activities by editors in this new distribution medium. Particular mention is made on the creation of the Journals Portal "Latin American Journals Online" (LAMJOL), in which the Latindex collection center participated in close

cooperation with the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), as an additional measure to provide greater visibility and use of periodicals in the country.

In the case of Carlos Suárez Balseiro and Mariano Maura Sardó's contribution, the highlight is in the incorporation of Latindex editorial quality characteristics as part of a joint and continuous strategy to add value to the journals published by the University of Puerto Rico. It also highlights the formal training actions for journal editors, analyzing simultaneously some factors that undermine the international visibility of Puerto Rican journals. As in other countries in the region, the authors foresee a boom on online publications but, at the same time, point out the lack of definition of open access and self-archiving policies in most journals. They consider relevant to mention that Puerto Rico would benefit from an open access policy, citing evidences of it being a favorable factor towards greater visibility and citation.

The Dominican Republic's contribution, written by Giovanna Riggio Olivares, of APEC University, documents the current status of the countries journals, highlighting Latindex as a benchmark for editors' assistance when working to improve the quality of publications under their responsibility. It notes that these actions require structural changes in the editorial teams, as well as the implementation of editorial policies that allow journals to gain scientific prestige. It demonstrates that differently from what has occurred in other countries of the region, online publication in Puerto Rico is still in its inception and states that there has been considerable delay in taking advantage of the Internet to improve access, use and visibility of national publications. It sets the actions of diffusion, mentoring and promotion of editorial quality, as the main pivot points in which the national center has based its work.

Last but not least, the contribution of Uruguay, written by Laura Machado and Cecilia Valenzuela, sets off the bat the positive insertion of Latindex in the Uruguayan journals' scenario and, in particular, its close relationship with the editors, in

a systematic work that has allowed improvements in the professionalization of the sector in the country, leading to the creation of the first editor's national network. The shared work with other interested bodies has allowed outlining promising scenarios in actions related to journals' diffusion, access and visibility. The task performed by the Latindex center has reached not only editors, but also national researchers who see publishing in Uruguayan journals within the Catalog as an option for academic credit.

We wish to thank the Brazilian Science and Technology Information Institute (Ibict) and in particular its Director, Cecilia Leite, for the kind invitation to put together this issue and the authors from the various countries that have contributed to it.

Ana María Cetto
President of Latindex

José Octavio Alonso-Gamboa
General Coordinator of Latindex